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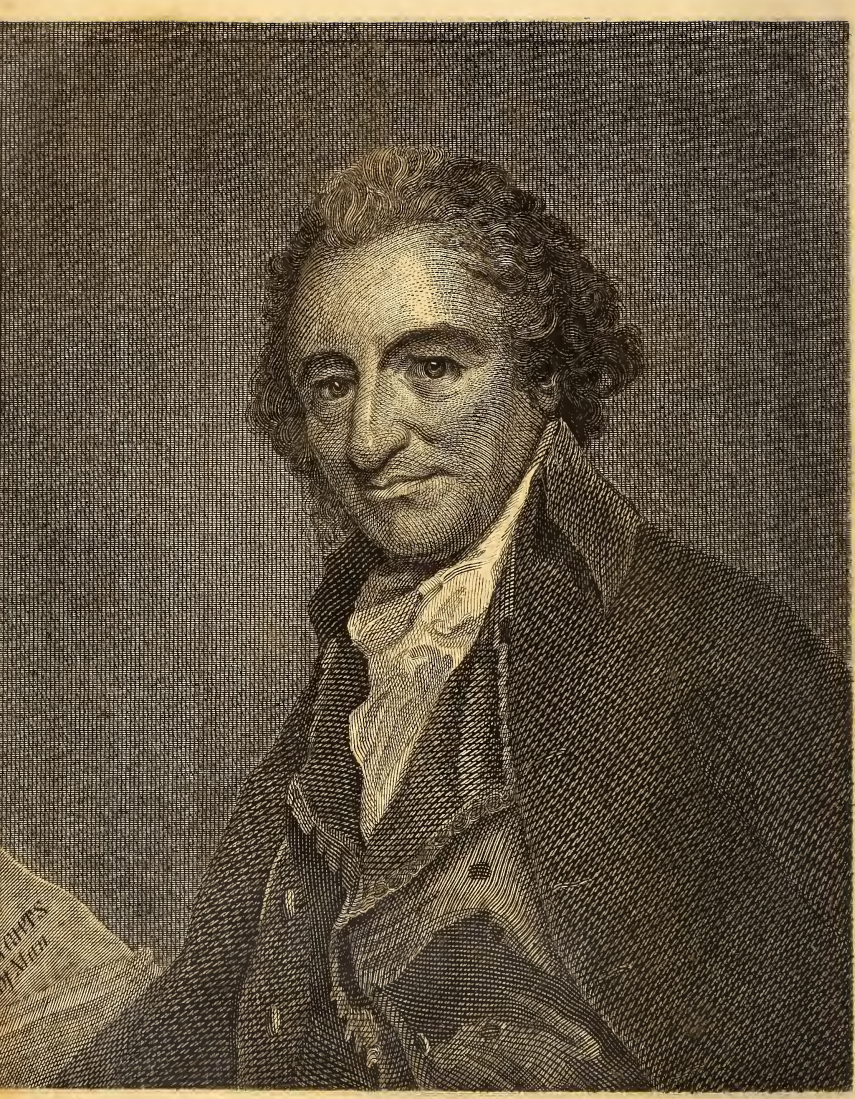

Wright

THOMAS PAINE.

THE

THEOLOGICAL WORKS

OF

THOMAS PAINE.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED THE

PROFESSION OF FAITH OF A SAVOYARD VICAR,

BY

J. J. ROUSSEAU;

AND OTHER MISCELLANEOUS PIECES.

NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM CARVER,

1830.

BL1735
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1830

P.
Jas. B. Elliott.
13 Aug. '03.

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PREFACE.

Had not religion been made an article of merchandise, and a class of men set apart to retail it for the benefit of themselves, the enormous evils that have resulted, would not have occurred. As it is, an opposition to the dogmas of a preacher of any denomination has a direct tendency, by lowering his tenets in the estimation of the public, to depreciate the profits of his trade. In self defence, therefore, he turns upon the assailant, and applies to him names to which he attaches opprobrious meanings, such as heretic, infidel, &c. Heretic, however, in the literal sense of the term, means simply a person who entertains an opinion on doctrinal points of religion contrary to the generally received opinion, at any particular period. Thus the catholics, by way of reproach, denominate the protestants heretics, and the protestants, in their turn, apply the same epithet to universalists and unitarians. The late Rev. John Mason, to show his strong disapprobation of the latter sect, went so far as to declare to his congregation, *that he would not disgrace the devil so much as to compare them to him.*

As to the term infidel, all sects are infidels to each other, in consequence of the discrepance in their respective tenets, which laymen have taken no more part in forming than in their own creation. They are made for them by persons who are paid for their services, and whose interest it is to render them obscure, that they may require explanation. As well, therefore, might mankind quarrel about their stature, as about a difference of opinions in the acquirement of which they have been entirely passive, and of the truth of which, neither laymen nor their teachers can have the least possible knowledge.

The whole mystery, as before observed, of the heart burnings and ill will among Christian sects, arises from having made of religion a trade; which has caused a rivalry and contention

among the professors of the art of soul-saving that would disgrace any other business whatever. It is of course the interest of every sectarian preacher to draw after him as many hearers as possible, in order to increase his emoluments ; and the means naturally suggested to effect this, is to abuse and vilify all other schemes of salvation but his own.

Thus have religious parties been formed, and deadly animosities engendered and cherished throughout christendom ever since the introduction of the Jewish and Christian dogmas ; and the gibbet and the stake have been appealed to as the ultimate reason of fanatics. Well, therefore, might the venerable John Adams exclaim, as reported by Jefferson, " This would be the best of worlds, if there were no religion in it."

The only cure for the evils of religion, the curse of superstition, which has been entailed upon mankind by an interested priesthood, is for every one to think for himself, and not pay others to think for him ; to reassume that common sense with which nature has endowed him, and of which he has been deprived by his spiritual teachers.

" We have," says Jefferson, (see Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 322,) " most unwisely committed to the hierophants of our particular superstition, the direction of public opinion, that lord of the universe. We have given them stated and privileged days to collect and catechise us, opportunities of delivering their oracles to the people in mass, and of moulding their minds as wax in the hollow of their hands. But in despite of their fulminations against endeavours to enlighten the general mind, to improve the reason of the people, and encourage them in the use of it, the liberality of this state will support this institution,* and give fair play to the cultivation of reason."

The manner in which ministers of the gospel are got up, is worthy a passing notice. Young men who receive a collegiate education, are governed in the choice of business, by the advice of parents, the opinion they entertain of the abilities they possess, or the apparent prospect of the greatest gain in either of the learned professions, without regard to their religious propensities. Those who determine on divinity, in the last year of their term at college, hold conference meetings, and exercise themselves in the art of praying, and in disquisitions on religion.

Divines thus formed, can readily accommodate their religion to circumstances. If they find the pulpit overstocked in the persuasion in which they were educated, they often change their opinion, and adopt another creed. There are several instances in this city, of young men, who were educated presbyterians, becoming episcopal clergymen, in consequence, as they declared to intimate friends, of that church paying better than the one they abandoned. Men of liberal education, who have gained

* The University of Charlottesville, in Virginia, of which Mr. Jefferson was the founder.

some knowledge of the frauds of religion, can easier change their creeds than sincere devotees who are duped by them.

And what does their preaching amount to? What is the mighty boon obtained, as is said, by the excruciating sufferings even of a God; the glad tidings trumpeted forth by divines, and hailed with great joy by their grateful hearers? What is it, but that a very small portion of the human species will be made happy in another life, and that the remainder will be roasted, in a brimstone fire, to all eternity? Are these glad tidings? Are they not rather to be deprecated as the tidings of damnation? Shall human reason be tortured for arguments in proof of a doctrine so abhorrent to justice and humanity; so abhorrent to any rational idea that can be conceived of a Creator, and of every principle of right and wrong established among men? The chances in this lottery of life and death, according to the statements of theologians, are at least, a thousand to one against every living soul; and yet the scheme is cherished as an infinite benefit to mankind. And what are the alleged causes that involved the human race in this shocking predicament? Why, that a woman in some age of the world, nobody knows when or where, eat an apple, or some other fruit, contrary to the commands of her Maker.

> "The very head and front of her offending
> Hath this extent, no more."

Upon this pitiful story, the whole foundation of priestcraft is laid. It is followed up with the sacrifice of a god to atone for the monstrous offence of poor Eve; and then comes the great benefit of the boasted atonement; which, by the way, is to procure salvation only for those who had been previously elected for that purpose; and who are coerced into the true faith through the instrumentality of the Holy Ghost, without the least claims on account of their own merits; whilst the rest, who could be no more implicated in the *faux pas* of the first pair than the former, are debarred that favour by an absolute decree. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness."

It is matter of surprise that any person, who believes in the existence of a Supreme Being, should have the hardihood to attribute to him such deliberate cruelty, such pitiful subterfuge, such palpable mockery of justice?

All clergymen deem themselves to be numbered among the elect, and are so considered by their followers; and that the bulk of their congregations are doomed to perdition. In this point of view, it is heart-rending for a man of sense and feeling to witness with what sang froid, and cruel, I had almost said savage exultation, they expatiate upon the tortures of the damned; whilst their hearers, as tame and passive as lambs, listen with reverential awe and respect, and appear to acquiesce in the justness of their condemnation. In fact, the members of presbyterian congregations, in general, would not like their minister if he

did not preach hell fire as the just reward of their backslidings, and want of faith and zeal in the cause of Christ; and in default thereof, would change him for another more orthodox. As is required, they profess a willingness to be damned, provided nevertheless, that the glory of God shall be thereby enhanced.

The following are fair samples of the eternal ding-dong upon this subject, with which calvinistic divines regale their hearers.

The late Dr. Jonathan Edwards, (whose writings are highly applauded by the English reviewers, who seem to consider it their interest to commend those whose aim is to stupify and besot the minds of the people,) in a sermon on the duration and torments of hell, says,

"Be entreated to consider attentively how great and awful a thing Eternity is. Although you cannot comprehend it the more by considering, yet you may be made more sensible that it is not a thing to be disregarded. Do but consider what it is to suffer extreme pain for ever and ever; to suffer it day and night, from one day to another, from one year to another, from one age to another, from one thousand ages to another; and so adding age to age, and thousands to thousands, in pain, in wailing and tormenting, groaning and shrieking, and gnashing your teeth; with your souls full of dreadful grief and amazement, with your bodies, and every member of them, full of racking torture; without any possibility of getting ease; without any possibility of moving God to pity by your cries; without any possibility of hiding yourselves from him; without any possibility of diverting your thoughts from your pain; without any possibility of obtaining any manner of mitigation, or help, or change for the better. How dismal will it be, when you are under these racking torments, to know assuredly that you never, never shall be delivered from them."—"The saints in glory will be far more sensible how dreadful the wrath of God is, and will better understand how terrible the sufferings of the damned are, yet this will be no occasion of *grief* to them, but *rejoicing*. They will not be *sorry* for the damned; it will cause no uneasiness or dissatisfaction to them, but, on the contrary, when they see this sight it will occasion *rejoicing* and *excite* them to *joyful praises*."

The Rev. Dr. Emmons, of Massachusetts, distinguished for his piety and biblical knowledge, gives the following lively description of the joys of the elect, contrasted with the sufferings of the reprobated:

"The happiness of the elect in heaven will in part consist in witnessing the torments of the damned in hell, and among these it may be their own children, parents, husbands, wives, and friends on earth.

"One part of the business of the blessed is to celebrate the doctrine of reprobation. While the decree of reprobation is externally executing on the vessels of wrath, the smoke of their torment will be eternally ascending in the view of the vessels of

mercy, who instead of taking the part of those *miserable objects*, will say *amen*, *hallelujah*, *praise the Lord*.

"When the saints shall see how great the misery is from which God hath saved them, and how great a difference he hath made between their state, and the state of others *who were by nature, and perhaps by practice, no more sinful and ill-deserving than they*, it will give them more a sense of the wonderfulness of God's grace to them. Every time they look upon the damned, it will *excite* in them a *lively* and *admiring sense* of the grace of God in making them so to differ. The sight of *hell torments* will *exalt* the *happiness* of the *saints for ever*."

Dr. Parish, of the same state, in a sermon delivered in the time of our late war with England, in denunciation of his countrymen who rendered it their support, exclaimed, "How will the supporters of this *anti-christian* warfare endure their sentence, endure their own reflections; endure the fire that for ever burns; the worm that never dies; the *hosannas* of heaven, while the smoke of their torments will ascend *for ever and ever!*"

Notwithstanding the confidence and apparent self-security in which presbyterian ministers animadvert upon the vindictive spirit of the Almighty, and the horrors of that hell, which, according to them, he has prepared for the reception of the greatest portion of his creatures, if reliance can be had upon the view taken of the means necessary for salvation by the late Bishop Hobart, their condemnation is inevitable.

The grand panacea for the cure of all evil, and the restoration of man to the favour of the Deity, seems, with the bishop, to consist in the due administration of the rite of baptism. In his Companion to the Altar, he says:

"In this church, the body which derives life, strength and salvation from Christ its head, *baptism* was instituted as the sacred rite of admission. In this *regenerating ordinance*, fallen man is *born again* from a state of condemnation to a state of grace. He obtains a *title* to the presence of the Holy Spirit, to the forgiveness of sins, to all those precious and immortal blessings which the blood of Christ purchased." *Com. for the Altar, ed.* 1824, *p.* 186.

"Wherever the gospel is promulgated, the *only mode* through which we can obtain a title to those blessings and privileges which Christ has purchased for his mystical body, the church, is the *sacrament of baptism*. *Repentance*, *faith*, and *obedience*, *will not* of themselves be effectual to our salvation. We may sincerely repent of our sins—heartily believe the Gospel; we may walk in the paths of holy obedience: but until we enter into covenant with God by *baptism*, and ratify our vows of allegiance and duty at the holy sacrament of the Supper—commemorate the mysterious sacrifice of Christ, we cannot assert any claim to salvation." *Ib. pp.* 189—90.

"In order to be effectual, to be acknowledged by God, and accompanied by his power, they (the sacraments) must be administered by those who have received a commission for the purpose from him."—"None can possess authority to administer the sacraments but those who have received *a commission* from the bishops of the church."—"Great is the guilt and imminent the danger of those who negligently or *wilfully* continue in a state of separation from the authorised ministrations of the church, and participate of ordinances administered by an irregular and invalid authority"—"wilfully rending the peace and unity of the church, by separating from the administration of its authorised priesthood; *obstinately contemning* the means which God has prescribed for their salvation. They are guilty of *rebellion* against the almighty Lawgiver and Judge; they expose themselves to the awful displeasure of that almighty Jehovah, who will not suffer his institutions to be contemned, or his authority violated, with impunity." *Ib. pp.* 198—200: 203—4.

This is all fair as a matter of trade. The rivalry for adherents constantly carried on among the various denominations of Christians, justifies every divine in endeavouring to draw as many gulls to his shop as possible; and the end must sanctify the means.

From this nonsense, advanced even by wise men, with a view of promoting their interests, it is pleasant to turn to the writings of philosophers who have not the same inducements.

Thomas Jefferson speaks of religion as every man of common sense, not under the influence of early impressions before the mind is capable of distinguishing right from wrong, thinks; and as every honourable man, who wishes to benefit his species, ought to express himself.

The following sentiments are extracted from his correspondence with his old revolutionary colleague, John Adams, whose minds seem in perfect unison on the subject treated of; both must be actuated by the purest motives of humanity, as no sinister views could possibly be entertained at the late period in which the letters were written.

"I remember to have heard Dr. Priestleysay, that if all England would candidly examine themselves, and confess, they would find that unitarianism was really the religion of all. It is too late in the day for men of sincerity to pretend they believe in the Platonic mysticisms that three are one, and one is three; and yet that the one is not three, and the three are not one: to divide mankind by a single letter into *homoousians* and *homoiousians.* But this constitutes the craft, the power, and the profit of the priests. Sweep away their gossamer fabrics of factitious religion, and they would catch no more flies. We should all then, like the Quakers, live without an order of priests, moralize for ourselves, follow the oracle of conscience, and say nothing about what no man can understand nor therefore believe; for I sup-

pose belief to be the assent of the mind to an intelligible proposition." Vol. iv. p. 205.

"The Christian priesthood, finding the doctrine of Christ levelled to every understanding, and too plain to need explanation, saw in the mysticisms of Plato, materials with which they might build up an artificial system, which might, from its indistinctness, admit everlasting controversy, give employment for their order, and introduce it to profit, power, and pre-eminence. The doctrines which flowed from the lips of Jesus himself are within the comprehension of a child; but thousands of volumes have not yet explained the Platonisms engrafted on them; and for this obvious reason, that nonsense can never be explained. Their purposes, however, are answered. Plato is canonized; and it is now deemed as impious to question his merits as those of an apostle of Jesus." *Ib. p.* 242.

"The doctrines of Jesus are simple, and tend all to the happiness of man. But compare with these the demoralizing dogmas of Calvin.

"1. That there are three Gods.—2. That good works, or the love of our neighbour, are nothing.—3. That faith is every thing, and the more incomprehensible the proposition, the more merit in its faith.—4. That reason in religion is of unlawful use. —5. That God, from the beginning, elected certain individuals to be saved, and certain others to be damned; and that no crimes of the former can damn them; no virtues of the latter, save.

"Now, which of these is the true and charitable Christian: he who believes and acts on the simple doctrines of Jesus, or the impious dogmatists, as Athanasius and Calvin?" *Ib. p.* 349.

"The wishes expressed in your last favour, that I may continue in life and health until I become a Calvinist, would make me immortal. I can never join Calvin in addressing his God. He was indeed an atheist, which I can never be; or rather his religion was dæmonism. If ever man worshipped a false God, he did. The being described in his five points, is not the God whom you and I acknowledge and adore, the creator and benevolent governor of the world; but a dæmon of malignant spirit. It would be more pardonable to believe in no God at all, than to blaspheme him by the atrocious attributes of Calvin. Indeed, I think that every Christian sect gives a great handle to atheism by their general dogma, that, without a revelation, there would not be sufficient proof of the being of a God. Now, one-sixth of mankind only are supposed to be Christians: the other five-sixths then, who do not believe in the Jewish and Christian revelation, are without a knowledge of the existence of a God!" *Ib. p.* 363.

"The result of your fifty or sixty years of religious reading in the four words, 'Be just and good,' is that in which all our inquiries must end; as the riddles of all the priesthoods end in four

more, '*Ubi panis, ibi deus.*'" *Ib. p.* 300. *Where there is bread, there is God.* That is, whatever religion is most conducive to the interests of the clergy, that they will preach. This is what the professors of every other kind of business do. If any community of people should prefer five wheels to a coach, and would give high prices for such, a coach-maker would act very unwisely to refuse to accommodate them. The clergy are, therefore, not so much to blame as the people who take their quack medicines and pay very dear for them. If praying be of any service, every one knows what he stands most in need of, and should therefore prefer his own petitions, instead of paying others for doing it. And as for moral instruction, there are certainly books enough extant upon that subject, the cost of which is nothing in comparison to what is paid for oral sermons.

Let the people shake off the shackles with which they are bound by the existing priestcraft, and profess a manly religion, founded upon moral virtue alone, divested of all creeds, as the sure and only foundation of happiness here and hereafter, and they would soon find teachers enough who would accommodate themselves to their wishes. In this case, useful, scientific instruction would form a prominent part of the preacher's duty. How much more pleasant and satisfactory would such a course be, than in listening to the eternal repetition of stupid, unintelligible dogmas, which can never be of the least possible advantage.

The religious opinions of Jefferson, Franklin, John Adams, and a host of wise and good men in Europe and America, differ in no respect from those of Thomas Paine. Yet he has been singled out particularly as a mark for the priesthood to aim their most deadly shafts. This, no doubt, arose from fear that his writings would prove more destructive to the craft than those of other liberal writers, on account of the bold, plain common sense which distinguishes his compositions.

Mr. Paine's natural goodness of heart seems to have rendered him sceptical in the prevailing religious dogmas, at an early period. He says, "from the time I was capable of conceiving an idea and acting upon it by reflection, I either doubted the truth of the Christian system, or thought it to be a strange affair; I scarcely know which it was, but I well remember, when about seven or eight years of age, hearing a sermon read upon the Redemption, by the death of the Son of God. After the sermon was ended, I revolted at the recollection of what I had heard; it was to me a serious reflection, arising from the idea I had, that God was too good to do such an action, and also too almighty to be under the necessity of doing it. I believed in the same manner to this moment."

Of Jesus Christ he speaks in the following terms: "The morality that he preached and practised was of the most benevolent kind; according to his declarations, in the 25th chapter of

Matthew, he makes salvation, or the future happiness of man, to depend entirely upon *good works*. Here is nothing about predestination, that lust which some men have for damning one another. Here is nothing about baptism, whether sprinkling or plunging, nor about any of those ceremonies for which the Christian church has been fighting, persecuting and burning each other, ever since the Christian church began."

In another part, he says, "My own opinion is, that those whose lives have been spent in doing good, and endeavouring to make their fellow mortals happy, for this is the only way in which we can serve God, *will be happy hereafter:* and that the very wicked will meet with some punishment. This is my opinion. It is consistent with my idea of God's justice, and with the reason that God has given me."

Why should Mr. Paine be reprobated for these opinions, and the clergy, who proclaim the eternal damnation of their species, be approved of and applauded? The reason is plain. The clergy "mould the minds of the people like wax in the hollow of their hands." They well know, if Paine's principles prevail, their consequence and high salaries would be at an end. Hence the outcry against him and those who adopt his opinions. King's, in the first instance, created a band of priests to tyrannize over the mental faculties of man, that they might the more readily enslave him; and the American republic imbibed the malady through a predisposition to infection inherited from their ancestors. The business of life is incorporated with priestcraft, and whoever takes an honorable part in vindication of truth, is sure to meet with abuse. The doctrine of *let us alone*, is the constant cry of priests, and the fear of censure from the pulpit creates and fosters the detestable crime of hypocrisy.

The flatteries and respect shown to the clerical character, of all denominations, has induced some of the profession to adopt a language towards their opponents truly astonishing. In fact, many preachers of the Gospel of Christ, seem to consider themselves licenced calumniators, and that they have a right, by virtue of their office, to abuse the whole human race, as enemies to God and all righteousness.

A few years since, a young preacher of the Methodist *connection* arrived in this country from England. He laid great claims to religious endowments, and, in consequence of his pertness and assurance, was highly caressed by the members of his church. Emboldened by the attentions he received, in order to show his zeal for the cause, he had the effrontery, at a tract society meeting, to express himself in the following terms: "I thank God, that the bones of Tom Paine have been *rooted up*, and no longer disgrace the soil of *our* country." No man at the meeting, or in the public prints since, dared to reprove him. As a man of God, he was deemed to be privileged to stigmatize the memory

of one who had so powerfully opposed the clerical scheme of eternal misery.

The same spirit, which dictated the above declaration, is conspicuous in an article that lately appeared in the New-York Herald, supposed to be written by an English clergyman of the Episcopal church. It is entitled, "The Lone Tomb; a scene in Westchester county." The object of it was to eulogize the virtues of a young woman who died in New-Rochelle, at the age of nineteen. Thomas Paine, at the mention of whose name, the clergy were wont to quake, was also dead, and had been interred in the same village. What a glorious opportunity—it was irresistible; and the pious parson improved it to bespatter the tomb of the great advocate of human rights; the vindicator of the justice and goodness of God; the opponent of the pleaders for Calvinistic fire and brimstone. And, strange as it may appear, he found an American printer who was enjoying, in common with his countrymen, the fruits of Paine's revolutionary services, indiscreet, or shall I say, base enough to lend his types in furtherance of the unholy purpose.

The article concludes as follows: "Here is found the delightful village where the pious, but persecuted Huguenots, fleeing from oppressions of bigotry and intolerance, found a quiet and a happy home; and where too is still pointed out the *consecrated* little enclosure, in which, when the toils and sufferings of this life were over, they rested from their labors. And here, alas! that the place should be known but to be shunned,—here is yet seen the ruins of the sad and forsaken spot rendered *infamous* by the sepulchre of the *infidel Paine!!*"

This consistent Christian writer, in persecuting the memory of Paine, commits the same outrage that he reprobates in others.—But, in the one case, it regarded pious Huguenots, Calvinists, who believed in hell-fire; in the other an *infidel*, who was endeavouring to wrest mankind from the clutches of the clergy, and to render them happy, here and hereafter, by the mere force of moral virtue. The difference, in the view of a minister of the gospel, must be enormous indeed.—But where were nine-tenths of these believing Huguenots, according to their own doctrine, after their toils and sufferings were over, to rest? In hell, among glowing embers! This is a true statement of the case, and I leave the reader to his own reflections.

I will mention one more instance of clerical charity and forbearance. A preacher in the Dutch church, corner of Cedar and Nassau streets, lately gave vent to the following rodomontade:—

"A deist, he said, was no man—he *unmans* himself—he is an enemy to science—denies *all* history, and is a rebel to *Almighty God!*" The last clause of the sentence the speaker pronounced with great energy, raising at the same time both hands to heaven. A gentleman, in company with the reporter, who

mistook declamation for argument, on leaving the church, observed, that Mr. —— was a *most powerful preacher;* and probably this was the opinion of the bulk of the audience. It is, however, still a mooted case, which is the greatest rebel to God, the deist who represents him as benevolent, just and merciful; or the Calvinistic divine who clothes him with attributes that would disgrace a savage?

> "The quality of mercy is not strain'd;
> It droppeth, as the gentle rain from heaven
> Upon the place beneath: it is twice blessed;
> It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes:
> 'Tis mightiest in the *mightiest.*"

By the extracts I have made from the writings and speeches of clergymen, some might be inclined to think them in general a very wicked class of men; but this is by no means the case.—They are like men in other pursuits of life, some good and some bad. The system is more in fault, than the professors. They are hired to teach a certain set of dogmas, which they cannot depart from without bringing ruin upon themselves. Were a presbyterian parson, for instance, to say to his congregation, that God was too benevolent and merciful to punish any of them to all eternity; that punishments would be graduated to crimes, and that if their lives were moral, they need be in no fear of incurring his displeasure on account of their opinions; the consequence would be that every old lady imbued with orthodox principles, and who had an enemy, on earth, that she wished to be roasted forever, would immediately quit his church. Their daughters would take the same course, and the men would be compelled to follow suit. The parson, consequently, would be left without hearers, and without bread. Let us not, then, blame the clergy, but ourselves. Old bigoted schemes of religion must be broken down, and plain common sense substituted for them; and this must be done by laymen—it is not in the power of the clergy to effect it.

I will here introduce a few appropriate questions, propounded by the celebrated Voltaire.

"Next to our *holy* religion, which would be the least exceptionable? Would it not be the most simple—that which taught a great deal of morality and few doctrines—that which tended to make men virtuous without making them fools—that which did not impose the belief of things impossible, contradictory, injurious to the deity, and pernicious to mankind; and which did not take on itself to threaten, with eternal punishments, all who had common sense? Would it not be that which did not support its articles by executioners, and deluge the world with blood, for unintelligible sophisms? Would it not be that which taught only the adoration of one God, of justice, forbearance and humanity?"

After all that Christian divines have said of the intensity and eternity of hell-fire, to which, according to them, the greater por-

tion of mankind are doomed, admitting even, for the sake of argument, the authority of the Jewish and Christian scriptures, there is not a word in those books which designates the terrific place represented by them. The Hebrew words *Scheol* and *Hades* which have been translated *hell*, mean nothing more, as every Jew can inform us, than the *grave*. The Gehinnom of the Old Testament and the Gehenna of the New, also translated hell, mean the valley of Hinnom; wherein the Israelites sacrificed their children to the god *Moloch;* and where a fire was continually burning to consume the dead bodies of criminals to whom the rite of sepulchre was not granted, as well as the filth of Jerusalem.

Moloch was a name given to a representation or emblem of the sun, which was itself only a symbol of the divinity, inherited by the Jews from the Egyptians. The fire in the Valley of Hinnom, for the purposes before mentioned, was first established by king Josiah about one thousand years after the supposed death of Moses, and was not suffered to be extinguished. The insects which subsisted upon the garbage scattered about this valley were, of course, never extinct; hence the exclamation, "*Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched!*"

Tartarus, once mentioned in the New Testament, is pre-eminently the hell of the ancient Greeks and Romans, but owes its origin to Egypt. The burying ground of Memphis, the ancient capital of Egypt, was on an island called Elyzout, decorated with beautiful groves and meadows; to arrive at which it was necessary to pass a small lake, on whose margin three Judges were stationed to examine into the characters of the defunct; if they proved good, a passport was given by them to the ferry-man, called Charon, to transmit the bodies, otherwise they were cast into a deep *pit*, denominated *Tartarus;* from whence is probably derived the expression *bottomless pit*, made use of in the Apocalypse.

The Egyptians had an idea that the soul after death enjoyed or suffered with the body; and, in this respect, the contrast between Elyzout and Tartarus must, in their eyes, have appeared infinite.

From this custom of the Egyptians have arisen the fables of the Greeks and Romans of the pleasures enjoyed by those who had the good fortune to arrive at Elyzout, or Elysian fields, as they called it, and the various torments inflicted upon those doomed to Tartarus.

But it is time for mankind to cease to believe in fables; to cease to teach, or hear them taught, as sacred truths; to study their real predicament in nature, and to regulate their lives accordingly.

EDITOR.

THE

AGE OF REASON.

PART FIRST.

TO MY

FELLOW CITIZENS

OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

I PUT the following work under your protection. It contains my opinion upon Religion. You will do me the justice to remember, that I have always strenuously supported the Right of every Man to his opinion, however different that opinion might be to mine. He who denies to another this right, makes a slave of himself to his present opinion, because he precludes himself the right of changing it.

The most formidable weapon against errors of every kind is Reason. I have never used any other, and I trust I never shall.

Your affectionate friend and fellow citizen,

THOMAS PAINE.

Luxembourg, (*Paris*,) 8*th Pulviose*,
Second year of the French Republic, one and indivisible.
January 27, *O. S.* 1794.

THE

AGE OF REASON.

PART THE FIRST.

BEING AN INVESTIGATION OF TRUE AND FABULOUS THEOLOGY.

It has been my intention, for several years past, to publish my thoughts upon religion; I am well aware of the difficulties that attend the subject, and, from that consideration, had reserved it to a more advanced period of life. I intended it to be the last offering I should make to my fellow citizens of all nations, and that at a time when the purity of the motive that induced me to it, could not admit of a question, even by those who might disapprove the work.

The circumstance that has now taken place in France of the total abolition of the whole national order of priesthood, and of every thing appertaining to compulsive systems of religion, and compulsive articles of faith, has not only precipitated my intention, but rendered a work of this kind exceedingly necessary, lest, in the general wreck of superstition, of false systems of government, and false theology, we lose sight of morality, of humanity, and of the theology that is true.

As several of my colleagues, and others of my fellow-citizens of France, have given me the example of making their voluntary and individual profession of faith, I also will make mine; and I do this with all that sincerity and frankness with which the mind of man communicates with itself.

I believe in one God, and no more ; and I hope for happiness beyond this life.

I believe the equality of man; and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavouring to make our fellow creatures happy.

But, lest it should be supposed that I believe many other things in addition to these, I shall, in the progress of this work, declare the things I do not believe, and my reasons for not believing them.

I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish church, by the Roman church, by the Greek church, by the Turkish church, by the Protestant church, nor by any church that I know of. My own mind is my own church.

All national institutions of churches, whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions, set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit.

I do not mean by this declaration to condemn those who believe otherwise ; they have the same right to their belief as I have to mine. But it is necessary to the happiness of man, that he be mentally faithful to himself. Infidelity does not consist in believing, or in disbelieving; it consists in professing to believe what he does not believe.

It is impossible to calculate the moral mischief, if I may so express it, that mental lying has produced in society. When a man has so far corrupted and prostituted the chastity of his mind, as to subscribe his professional belief to things he does not believe, he has prepared himself for the commission of every other crime. He takes up the trade of a priest for the sake of gain, and, in order to qualify himself for that trade, he begins with a perjury. Can we conceive any thing more destructive to morality than this?

Soon after I had published the pamphlet, "COMMON SENSE," in America, I saw the exceeding probability that a revolution in the system of government would be followed by a revolution in the system of religion. The adulterous connection of church and state, wherever it had taken place, whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish, had so effectually prohibited, by pains and penalties, every discussion upon established creeds, and upon first principles of religion, that until the system of government should be

changed, those subjects could not be brought fairly and openly before the world; but that whenever this should be done, a revolution in the system of religion would follow. Human inventions and priest-craft would be detected; and man would return to the pure, unmixed, and unadulterated belief of one God, and no more.

Every national church or religion has established itself by pretending some special mission from God, communicated to certain individuals. The Jews have their Moses; the Christians their Jesus Christ, their apostles, and saints; and the Turks their Mahomet, as if the way to God was not open to every man alike.

Each of those churches show certain books, which they call *revelation*, or the word of God. The Jews say, that their word of God was given by God to Moses, face to face; the Christians say, that their word of God came by divine inspiration; and the Turks say, that their word of God (the Koran) was brought by an angel from Heaven. Each of those churches accuse the other of unbelief; and, for my own part, I disbelieve them all.

As it is necessary to affix right ideas to words, I will, before I proceed further into the subject, offer some other observations on the word *revelation*. Revelation when applied to religion, means something communicated *immediately* from God to man.

No one will deny or dispute the power of the Almighty to make such a communication, if he pleases. But admitting, for the sake of a case, that something has been revealed to a certain person, and not revealed to any other person, it is revelation to that person only. When he tells it to a second person, a second to a third, a third to a fourth, and so on, it ceases to be a revelation to all those persons. It is revelation to the first person only, and *hearsay* to every other, and, consequently, they are not obliged to believe it.

It is a contradiction in terms and ideas, to call any thing a revelation that comes to us at second-hand, either verbally or in writing. Revelation is necessarily limited to the first communication—after this, it is only an account of something which that person says was a revelation made to him; and though he may find himself obliged to believe it, it cannot be incumbent on me to believe it in the same manner; for it was not a revelation made to *me*, and I have only his word for it that it was made to him.

When Moses told the children of Israel that he received the two tables of the commandments from the hands of God, they were

not obliged to believe him, because they had no other authority for it than his telling them so; and I have no other authority for it than some historian telling me so. The commandments carry no internal evidence of divinity with them; they contain some good moral precepts, such as any man qualified to be a lawgiver, or a legislator, could produce himself, without having recourse to supernatural intervention.*

When I am told that the Koran was written in Heaven, and brought to Mahomet by an angel, the account comes too near the same kind of hearsay evidence and second-hand authority as the former. I did not see the angel myself, and, therefore, I have a right not to believe it.

When also I am told that a woman called the Virgin Mary, said, or gave out, that she was with child without any cohabitation with a man, and that her betrothed husband, Joseph, said that an angel told him so, I have a right to believe them or not; such a circumstance required a much stronger evidence than their bare word for it; but we have not even this—for neither Joseph nor Mary wrote any such matter themselves; it is only reported by others that *they said so*—it is hearsay upon hearsay, and I do not choose to rest my belief upon such evidence.

It is, however, not difficult to account for the credit that was given to the story of Jesus Christ being the son of God. He was born when the heathen mythology had still some fashion and repute in the world, and that mythology had prepared the people for the belief of such a story. Almost all the extraordinary men that lived under the heathen mythology were reputed to be the sons of some of their gods. It was not a new thing, at that time, to believe a man to have been celestially begotten; the intercourse of gods with women was then a matter of familiar opinion. Their Jupiter, according to their accounts, had cohabited with hundreds; the story therefore had nothing in it either new, wonderful or obscene; it was conformable to the opinions that then prevailed among the people called Gentiles, or Mythologists, and it was those people only that believed it. The Jews, who had kept strictly to the belief of one God, and no more, and who had always rejected the heathen mythology, never credited the story.

* It is, however, necessary to except the declaration which says that God *visits the sins of the fathers upon the children;* it is contrary to every principle of moral justice.

It is curious to observe how the theory of what is called the Christian Church, sprung out of the tail of heathen mythology. A direct incorporation took place in the first instance, by making the reputed founder to be celestially begotten. The trinity of gods that then followed was no other than a reduction of the former plurality, which was about twenty or thirty thousand; the statue of Mary succeeded the statue of Diana of Ephesus; the deification of heroes changed into the canonization of saints; the mythologists had gods for every thing; the Christian Mythologists had saints for every thing; the church became as crowded with the one, as the pantheon had been with the other; and Rome was the place of both. The Christian theory is little else than the idolatry of the ancient Mythologists, accommodated to the purposes of power and revenue; and it yet remains to reason and philosophy to abolish the amphibious fraud.

Nothing that is here said can apply, even with the most distant disrespect, to the *real* character of Jesus Christ. He was a virtuous and an amiable man. The morality that he preached and practised was of the most benevolent kind; and though similar systems of morality had been preached by Confucius, and by some of the Greek philosophers, many years before; by the Quakers since; and by many good men in all ages, it has not been exceeded by any.

Jesus Christ wrote no account of himself, of his birth, parentage, or any thing else; not a line of what is called the New Testament is of his own writing. The history of him is altogether the work of other people; and as to the account given of his resurrection and ascension, it was the necessary counterpart to the story of his birth. His historians, having brought him into the world in a supernatural manner, were obliged to take him out again in the same manner, or the first part of the story must have fallen to the ground.

The wretched contrivance with which this latter part is told, exceeds every thing that went before it. The first part, that of the miraculous conception, was not a thing that admitted of publicity; and therefore the tellers of this part of the story had this advantage, that though they might not be credited, they could not be detected. They could not be expected to prove it, because it was not one of those things that admitted of proof, and it was

impossible that the person of whom it was told could prove it himself.

But the resurrection of a dead person from the grave, and his ascension through the air, is a thing very different as to the evidence it admits of, to the invisible conception of a child in the womb. The resurrection and ascension, supposing them to have taken place, admitted of public and occular demonstration, like that of the ascension of a balloon, or the sun at noon day, to all Jerusalem at least. A thing which every body is required to believe, requires that the proof and evidence of it should be equal to all, and universal; and as the public visibility of this last related act, was the only evidence that could give sanction to the former part, the whole of it falls to the ground, because that evidence never was given. Instead of this, a small number of persons, not more than eight or nine, are introduced as proxies for the whole world, to say they saw it, and all the rest of the world are called upon to believe it. But it appears that Thomas did not believe the resurrection; and, as they say, would not believe without having occular and manual demonstration himself. *So neither will I*, and the reason is equally as good for me, and for every other person, as for Thomas.

It is in vain to attempt to palliate or disguise this matter. The story, so far as relates to the supernatural part, has every mark of fraud and imposition stamped upon the face of it. Who were the authors of it is as impossible for us now to know, as it is for us to be assured, that the books in which the account is related, were written by the persons whose names they bear; the best surviving evidence we now have respecting this affair is the Jews. They are regularly descended from the people who lived in the time this resurrection and ascension is said to have happened, and they say, *it is not true.* It has long appeared to me a strange inconsistency to cite the Jews as a proof of the truth of the story. It is just the same as if a man were to say, I will prove the truth of what I have told you, by producing the people who say it is false.

That such a person as Jesus Christ existed, and that he was crucified, which was the mode of execution at that day, are historical relations strictly within the limits of probability. He preached most excellent morality, and the equality of man; but he preached also against the corruptions and avarice of the Jewish priests, and this brought upon him the hatred and vengeance of

the whole order of priesthood. The accusation which those priests brought against him was that of sedition and conspiracy against the Roman government, to which the Jews were then subject and tributary; and it is not improbable that the Roman government might have some secret apprehensions of the effects of his doctrine as well as the Jewish priests; neither is it improbable that Jesus Christ had in contemplation the delivery of the Jewish nation from the bondage of the Romans. Between the two, however, this virtuous reformer and revolutionist lost his life.

It is upon this plain narrative of facts, together with another case I am going to mention, that the Christian Mythologists, calling themselves the Christian Church, have erected their fable, which for absurdity and extravagance, is not exceeded by any thing that is to be found in the mythology of the ancients.

The ancient Mythologists tell us that the race of Giants made war against Jupiter, and that one of them threw a hundred rocks against him at one throw: that Jupiter defeated him with thunder, and confined him afterwards under Mount Etna, and that every time the Giant turns himself, Mount Etna belches fire.

It is here easy to see that the circumstance of the mountain, that of its being a volcano, suggested the idea of the fable; and that the fable is made to fit and wind itself up with that circumstance.

The Christian Mythologists tell us, that their Satan made war against the Almighty, who defeated him, and confined him afterwards, not under a mountain, but in a pit. It is here easy to see that the first fable suggested the idea of the second; for the fable of Jupiter and the Giants was told many hundred years before that of Satan.

Thus far the ancient and the christian Mythologists differ very little from each other. But the latter have contrived to carry the matter much farther. They have contrived to connect the fabulous part of the story of Jesus Christ with the fable originating from Mount Etna; and, in order to make all the parts of the story tie together, they have taken to their aid the traditions of the Jews; for the Christian mythology is made up partly from the ancient mythology, and partly from the Jewish traditions.

The Christian Mythologists, after having confined Satan in a pit, were obliged to let him out again to bring on the sequel of the

fable. He is then introduced into the Garden of Eden in the shape of a snake or a serpent, and in that shape he enters into familiar conversation with Eve, who is no way surprised to hear a snake talk; and the issue of this tete-a-tete is, that he persuades her to eat an apple, and the eating of that apple damns all mankind.

After giving Satan this triumph over the whole creation, one would have supposed that the church Mythologists would have been kind enough to send him back to the pit: or, if they had not done this, that they would have put a mountain upon him, (for they say that their faith can remove a mountain) or have put him *under* a mountain, as the former Mythologists had done, to prevent his getting again among the women and doing more mischief. But instead of this, they leave him at large, without even obliging him to give his parole—the secret of which is, that they could not do without him; and after being at the trouble of making him, they bribed him to stay. They promised him ALL the Jews, ALL the Turks by anticipation, nine-tenths of the world beside, and Mahomet into the bargain. After this, who can doubt the bountifulness of the Christian mythology.

Having thus made an insurrection and a battle in Heaven, in which none of the combatants could be either killed or wounded—put Satan into the pit—let him out again—given him a triumph over the whole creation—damned all mankind by the eating of an apple, these Christian Mythologists bring the two ends of their fable together. They represent this virtuous and amiable man, Jesus Christ, to be at once both God and Man, and also the Son of God, celestially begotten, on purpose to be sacrificed, because they say that Eve in her longing had eaten an apple.

Putting aside every thing that might excite laughter by its absurdity, or detestation by its profaneness, and confining ourselves merely to an examination of the parts, it is impossible to conceive a story more derogatory to the Almighty, more inconsistent with his wisdom, more contradictory to his power, than this story is.

In order to make for it a foundation to rise upon, the inventors were under the necessity of giving to the being, whom they call Satan, a power equally as great, if not greater than they attribute to the Almighty. They have not only given him the power of liberating himself from the pit, after what they call his fall, but they have made that power increase afterwards to infinity. Before

this fall they represent him only as an angel of limited existence, as they represent the rest. After his fall, he becomes, by their account, omnipresent. He exists everywhere, and at the same time. He occupies the whole immensity of space.

Not content with this deification of Satan, they represent him as defeating, by stratagem, in the shape of an animal of the creation, all the power and wisdom of the Almighty. They represent him as having compelled the Almighty to the *direct necessity* either of surrendering the whole of the creation to the government and sovereignty of this Satan, or of capitulating for its redemption by coming down upon earth, and exhibiting himself upon a cross in the shape of a man.

Had the inventors of this story told it the contrary way, that is, had they represented the Almighty as compelling Satan to exhibit *himself* on a cross, in the shape of a snake, as a punishment for his new transgression, the story would have been less absurd—less contradictory. But, instead of this, they make the transgressor triumph, and the Almighty fall.

That many good men have believed this strange fable, and lived very good lives under that belief (for credulity is not a crime) is what I have no doubt of. In the first place, they were educated to believe it, and they would have believed any thing else in the same manner. There are also many who have been so enthusiastically enraptured by what they conceived to be the infinite love of God to man, in making a sacrifice of himself, that the vehemence of the idea has forbidden and deterred them from examining into the absurdity and profaneness of the story. The more unnatural any thing is, the more is it capable of becoming the object of dismal admiration.

But if objects for gratitude and admiration are our desire, do they not present themselves every hour to our eyes? Do we not see a fair creation prepared to receive us the instant we are born—a world furnished to our hands, that cost us nothing? Is it we that light up the sun, that pour down the rain, and fill the earth with abundance? Whether we sleep or wake, the vast machinery of the universe still goes on. Are these things, and the blessings they indicate in future, nothing to us? Can our gross feelings be excited by no other subjects than tragedy and suicide? Or is the gloomy pride of man become so intolerable, that nothing can flatter it but a sacrifice of the Creator?

I know that this bold investigation will alarm many, but it would be paying too great a compliment to their credulity to forbear it upon that account; the times and the subject demand it to be done. The suspicion that the theory of what is called the Christian church is fabulous, is becoming very extensive in all countries; and it will be a consolation to men staggering under that suspicion, and doubting what to believe and what to disbelieve, to see the subject freely investigated. I therefore pass on to an examination of the books called the Old and New Testament.

These books, beginning with Genesis and ending with Revelation, (which, by the bye, is a book of riddles that requires a revelation to explain it) are, we are told, the word of God. It is, therefore, proper for us to know who told us so, that we may know what credit to give to the report. The answer to this question is, that nobody can tell, except that we tell one another so. The case, however, historically appears to be as follows:—

When the church Mythologists established their system, they collected all the writings they could find, and managed them as they pleased. It is a matter altogether of uncertainty to us whether such of the writings as now appear under the name of the Old and New Testament, are in the same state in which those collectors say they found them, or whether they added, altered, abridged, or dressed them up.

Be this as it may, they decided by *vote* which of the books out of the collection they had made, should be the WORD OF GOD, and which should not. They rejected several; they voted others to be doubtful, such as the books called the Apocrypha; and those books which had a majority of votes, were voted to be the word of God. Had they voted otherwise, all the people, since calling themselves Christians, had believed otherwise—for the belief of the one comes from the vote of the other. Who the people were that did all this, we know nothing of, they called themselves by the general name of the Church; and this is all we know of the matter.

As we have no other external evidence or authority for believing those books to be the word of God, than what I have mentioned, which is no evidence or authority at all, I come, in the next place, to examine the internal evidence contained in the books themselves.

In the former part of this Essay, I have spoken of revelation.—I now proceed further with that subject, for the purpose of applying it to the books in question.

Revelation is a communication of something, which the person, to whom that thing is revealed, did not know before. For if I have done a thing, or seen it done, it needs no revelation to tell me I have done it, or seen it, nor to enable me to tell it, or to write it.

Revelation, therefore, cannot be applied to any thing done upon earth, of which man is himself the actor or the witness; and consequently all the historical and anecdotal part of the Bible, which is almost the whole of it, is not within the meaning and compass of the word revelation, and, therefore, is not the word of God.

When Sampson ran off with the gate-posts of Gaza, if he ever did so, (and whether he did or not is nothing to us,) or when he visited his Delilah, or caught his foxes, or did any thing else, what has revelation to do with these things? If they were facts, he could tell them himself; or his secretary, if he kept one, could write them, if they were worth either telling or writing; and if they were fictious, revelation could not make them true; and whether true or not, we are neither the better nor the wiser for knowing them. When we contemplate the immensity of that Being, who directs and governs the incomprehensible WHOLE, of which the utmost ken of human sight can discover but a part, we ought to feel shame at calling such paltry stories the word of God.

As to the account of the Creation, with which the book of Genesis opens, it has all the appearance of being a tradition which the Israelites had among them before they came into Egypt; and after their departure from that country, they put it at the head of their history, without telling (as it is most probable) that they did not know how they came by it. The manner in which the account opens, shows it to be traditionary. It begins abruptly: it is nobody that speaks; it is nobody that hears; it is addressed to nobody; it has neither first, second, or third person; it has every criterion of being a tradition, it has no voucher. Moses does not take it upon himself by introducing it with the formality that he

uses on other occasions, such as that of saying, "*The Lord spake unto Moses, saying.*"

Why it has been called the Mosaic account of the Creation, I am at a loss to conceive. Moses, I believe, was too good a judge of such subjects to put his name to that account. He had been educated among the Egyptians, who were a people as well skilled in science, and particularly in astronomy, as any people of their day; and the silence and caution that Moses observes, in not authenticating the account, is a good negative evidence that he neither told it nor believed it.—The case is, that every nation of people has been world-makers, and the Israelites had as much right to set up the trade of world-making as any of the rest; and as Moses was not an Israelite, he might not choose to contradict the tradition. The account, however, is harmless; and this is more than can be said of many other parts of the Bible.

Whenever we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness, with which more than half the Bible is filled, it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a demon, than the word of God. It is a history of wickedness, that has served to corrupt and brutalize mankind; and, for my own part, I sincerely detest it, as I detest every thing that is cruel.

We scarcely meet with any thing, a few phrases excepted, but what deserves either our abhorence or our contempt, till we come to the miscellaneous parts of the Bible. In the anonymous publications, the Psalms, and the Book of Job, more particularly in the latter, we find a great deal of elevated sentiment reverentially expressed of the power and benignity of the Almighty; but they stand on no higher rank than many other compositions on similar subjects, as well before that time as since.

The Proverbs which are said to be Solomon's, though most probably a collection, (because they discover a knowledge of life, which his situation excluded him from knowing) are an instructive table of ethics. They are inferior in keenness to the proverbs of the Spaniards, and not more wise and economical than those of the American Franklin.

All the remaining parts of the Bible, generally known by the name of the Prophets, are the works of the Jewish poets and itinerant preachers, who mixed poetry, anecdote, and devotion

together—and those works still retain the air and style of poetry, though in translation.*

There is not, throughout the whole book called the Bible, any word that describes to us what we call a poet, nor any word that describes what we call poetry. The case is, that the word *prophet*, to which latter times have affixed a new idea, was the Bible word for poet, and the word *prophesying* meant the art of making poetry. It also meant the art of playing poetry to a tune upon any instrument of music.

We read of prophesying with pipes, tabrets, and horns—of prophesying with harps, with psalteries, with cymbals, and with every other instrument of music then in fashion. Were we now to speak of prophesying with a fiddle, or with a pipe and tabor, the expression would have no meaning, or would appear ridiculous, and to some people contemptuous, because we have changed the meaning of the word.

We are told of Saul being among the *prophets*, and also that he prophesied; but we are not told what *they prophesied*, nor what *he prophesied*. The case is, there was nothing to tell; for these prophets were a company of musicians and poets, and Saul joined in the concert, and this was called *prophesying*.

* As there are many readers who do not see that a composition is poetry, unless it be in rhyme, it is for their information that I add this note.

Poetry consists principally in two things—imagery and composition. The composition of poetry differs from that of prose in the manner of mixing long and short syllables together. Take a long syllable out of a line of poetry, and put a short one in the room of it, or put a long syllable where a short one should be, and that line will lose its poetical harmony. It will have an effect upon the line like that of misplacing a note in a song.

The imagery in those books, called the prophets, appertains altogether to poetry. It is fictitious, and often extravagant, and not admissible in any other kind of writing than poetry.

To show that these writings are composed in poetical numbers, I will take ten syllables, as they stand in the book, and make a line of the same number of syllables (heroic measure) that shall rhyme with the last word. It will then be seen that the composition of those books is poetical measure. The instance I shall produce is from Isaiah:—

"*Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth!*"
'Tis God himself that calls attention forth.

Another instance I shall quote is from the mournful Jeremiah, to which I shall add two other lines, for the purpose of carrying out the figure, and showing the intention of the poet.

"*O! that mine head were waters and mine eyes*"
Were fountains flowing like the liquid skies;
Then would I give the mighty flood release,
And weep a deluge for the human race.

The account given of this affair in the book called Samuel, is, that Saul met a *company* of prophets: a whole company of them! coming down with a psaltery, a tabret, a pipe, and a harp, and that they prophesied, and that he prophesied with them. But it appears afterwards, that Saul prophesied badly; that is, performed his part badly; for it is said, that, an "*evil spirit from God*"* came upon Saul, and he prophesied.

Now, were there no other passage in the book called the Bible, than this, to demonstrate to us that we have lost the original meaning of the word *prophesy*, and substituted another meaning in its place, this alone would be sufficient; for it is impossible to use and apply the word *prophesy*, in the place it is here used and applied, if we give to it the sense which latter times have affixed to it. The manner in which it is here used strips it of all religious meaning, and shows that a man might then be a prophet, or he might *prophesy*, as he may now be a poet or musician, without any regard to the morality or immorality of his character. The word was originally a term of science, promiscuously applied to poetry and to music, and not restricted to any subject upon which poetry and music might be exercised.

Deborah and Barak are called prophets, not because they predicted any thing, but because they composed the poem or song that bears their name, in celebration of an act already done. David is ranked among the prophets, for he was a musician, and was also reputed to be (though perhaps very erroneously) the author of the Psalms. But Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are not called prophets; it does not appear from any accounts we have, that they could either sing, play music, or make poetry.

We are told of the greater and the lesser prophets. They might as well tell us of the greater and the lesser God; for there cannot be degrees in prophesying consistently with its modern sense.—But there are degrees in poetry, and therefore the phrase is reconcileable to the case, when we understand by it the greater and the lesser poets.

It is altogether unnecessary, after this, to offer any observations upon what those men, styled prophets, have written. The axe goes at once to the root, by showing that the original meaning of

* As those men who call themselves divines and commentators, are very fond of puzzling one another, I leave them to contest the meaning of the first part of the phrase, that of *an evil spirit of God*. I keep to my text—I keep to the meaning of the word prophesy.

the word has been mistaken, and consequently all the inferences that have been drawn from those books, the devotional respect that has been paid to them, and the laboured commentaries that have been written upon them, under that mistaken meaning, are not worth disputing about. In many things, however, the writings of the Jewish poets deserve a better fate than that of being bound up, as they now are, with the trash that accompanies them, under the abused name of the word of God.

If we permit ourselves to conceive right ideas of things, we must necessarily affix the idea, not only of unchangeableness, but of the utter impossibility of any change taking place, by any means or accident whatever, in that which we would honour with the name of the word of God; and therefore the word of God cannot exist in any written or human language.

The continually progressive change to which the meaning of words is subject, the want of an universal language which renders translation necessary, the errors to which translations are again subject, the mistakes of copyists and printers, together with the possibility of wilful alteration, are of themselves evidences that the human language, whether in speech or in print, cannot be the vehicle of the word of God. The word of God exists in something else.

Did the book, called the Bible, excel in purity of ideas and expression all the books now extant in the world, I would not take it for my rule of faith, as being the word of God, because the possibility would nevertheless exist of my being imposed upon. But when I see throughout the greatest part of this book, scarcely any thing but a history of the grossest vices, and a collection of the most paltry and contemptible tales, I cannot dishonor my Creator by calling it by his name.

Thus much for the Bible; I now go on to the book called the New Testament. The *New* Testament! that is, the *new* will, as if there could be two wills of the Creator.

Had it been the object or the intention of Jesus Christ to establish a new religion, he would undoubtedly have written the system himself, or *procured it to be written* in his life time. But there is no publication extant authenticated with his name. All the books called the New Testament were written after his death. He was a Jew by birth and by profession; and he was the son of God in

like manner that every other person is—for the Creator is the Father of All.

The first four books, called Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John, do not give a history of the life of Jesus Christ, but only detached anecdotes of him. It appears from these books, that the whole time of his being a preacher was not more than eighteen months; and it was only during this short time, that those men became acquainted with him. They make mention of him at the age of twelve years, sitting, they say, among the Jewish doctors, asking and answering them questions. As this was several years before their acquaintance with him began, it is most probable they had this anecdote from his parents. From this time there is no account of him for about sixteen years. Where he lived, or how he employed himself during this interval, is not known. Most probably he was working at his father's trade, which was that of a carpenter. It does not appear that he had any school education, and the probability is, that he could not write, for his parents were extremely poor, as appears from their not being able to pay for a bed when he was born.

It is somewhat curious that the three persons whose names are the most universally recorded, were of very obscure parentage. Moses was a foundling; Jesus Christ was born in a stable; and Mahomet was a mule driver. The first and the last of these men were founders of different systems of religion; but Jesus Christ founded no new system. He called men to the practice of moral virtues, and the belief of one God. The great trait in his character is philanthropy.

The manner in which he was apprehended, shows that he was not much known at that time; and it shows also, that the meetings he then held with his followers were in secret; and that he had given over or suspended preaching publicly. Judas could no otherwise betray him than by giving information where he was, and pointing him out to the officers that went to arrest him; and the reason for employing and paying Judas to do this could arise only from the cause already mentioned, that of his not being much known, and living concealed.

The idea of his concealment, not only agrees very ill with his reputed divinity, but associates with it something of pusillanimity; and his being betrayed, or in other words, his being apprehended, on the information of one of his followers, shows that he did not

intend to be apprehended, and consequently that he did not intend to be crucified.

The Christian Mythologists tell us, that Christ died for the sins of the world, and that he came on *purpose to die.* Would it not then have been the same if he had died of a fever, or of the small pox, of old age, or of any thing else?

The declaratory sentence which, they say, was passed upon Adam, in case he eat of the apple, was not, that *thou shalt surely be crucified, but, thou shalt surely die*—the sentence of death, and not the manner of dying. Crucifixion, therefore, or any other particular manner of dying, made no part of the sentence that Adam was to suffer, and consequently, even upon their own tactics, it could make no part of the sentence that Christ was to suffer in the room of Adam. A fever would have done as well as a cross, if there was any occasion for either.

The sentence of death, which they tell us, was thus passed upon Adam, must either have meant dying naturally, that is, ceasing to live, or have meant what these Mythologists call damnation; and consequently, the act of dying on the part of Jesus Christ, must according to their system, apply as a prevention to one or other of these two *things* happening to Adam and to us.

That it does not prevent our dying is evident, because we all die; and if their accounts of longevity be true, men die faster since the crucifixion than before; and with respect to the second explanation, (including with it the *natural death* of Jesus Christ as a substitute for the *eternal death or damnation* of all mankind,) it is impertinently representing the Creator as coming off, or revoking the sentence, by a pun or a quibble upon the word *death.* That manufacturer of quibbles, St. Paul, if he wrote the books that bear his name, has helped this quibble on by making another quibble upon the word *Adam.* He makes there to be two Adams; the one who sins in fact, and suffers by proxy: the other who sins by proxy, and suffers in fact. A religion thus interlarded with quibble, subterfuge, and pun, has a tendency to instruct its professors in the practice of these arts. They acquire the habit without being aware of the cause.

If Jesus Christ was the being which those Mythologists tell us he was, and that he came into this world to *suffer*, which is a word they sometimes use instead of *to die*, the only real suffering he could have endured, would have been *to live.* His existence here

was a state of exilement or transportation from Heaven, and the way back to his original country was to die.—In fine, every thing in this strange system is the reverse of what it pretends to be. It is the reverse of truth, and I become so tired of examining into its inconsistencies and absurdities, that I hasten to the conclusion of it, in order to proceed to something better.

How much, or what parts of the books called the New Testament, were written by the persons whose names they bear, is what we can know nothing of, neither are we certain in what language they were originally written. The matters they now contain may be classed under two heads—anecdote and epistolary correspondence.

The four books already mentioned, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are altogether anecdotal. They relate events after they had taken place. They tell what Jesus Christ did and said, and what others did and said to him; and in several instances they relate the same event differently. Revelation is necessarily out of the question with respect to those books; not only because of the disagreement of the writers, but because revelation cannot be applied to the relating of facts by the persons who saw them done, nor to the relating or recording of any discourse or conversation by those who heard it. The book called the Acts of the Apostles (an anonymous work) belongs also to the anecdotal part.

All the other parts of the New Testament, except the book of enigmas, called the Revelations, are a collection of letters under the name of epistles; and the forgery of letters has been such a common practice in the world, that the probability is at least equal, whether they are genuine or forged. One thing, however, is much less equivocal, which is, that out of the matters contained in those books, together with the assistance of some old stories, the church has set up a system of religion very contradictory to the character of the person whose name it bears. It has set up a religion of pomp and of revenue, in pretended imitation of a person whose life was humility and poverty.

The invention of purgatory, and of the releasing of souls therefrom, by prayers, bought of the church with money; the selling of pardons, dispensations and indulgencies, are revenue laws, without bearing that name or carrying that appearance. But the case nevertheless is, that those things derive their origin from the paroxysm of the crucifixion and the theory deduced therefrom.

which was, that one person could stand in the place of another, and could perform meritorious services for him. The probability, therefore, is, that the whole theory or doctrine of what is called the redemption (which is said to have been accomplished by the act of one person in the room of another) was originally fabricated on purpose to bring forward and build all those secondary and pecuniary redemptions upon; and that the passages in the books upon which the idea of theory of redemption is built, have been manufactured and fabricated for that purpose. Why are we to give this church credit, when she tells us that those books are genuine in every part, any more than we give her credit for every thing else she has told us; or for the miracles she says she has performed? That she *could* fabricate writings is certain, because she could write; and the composition of the writings in question, is of that kind that any body might do it; and that she *did* fabricate them is not more inconsistent with probability, than that she should tell us, as she has done, that she could and did work miracles.

Since, then, no external evidence can, at this long distance of time, be produced to prove whether the church fabricated the doctrines called redemption or not, (for such evidence, whether for or against, would be subject to the same suspicion of being fabricated,) the case can only be referred to the internal evidence which the thing carries within itself; and this affords a very strong presumption of its being a fabrication. For the internal evidence is, that the theory or doctrine of redemption has for its basis an idea of pecuniary justice, and not that of moral justice.

If I owe a person money, and cannot pay him, and he threatens to put me in prison, another person can take the debt upon himself, and pay it for me; but if I have committed a crime, every circumstance of the case is changed; moral justice cannot take the innocent for the guilty, even if the innocent would offer itself. To suppose justice to do this, is to destroy the principle of its existence, which is the thing itself; it is then no longer justice; it is indiscriminate revenge.

This single reflection will show that the doctrine of redemption is founded on a mere pecuniary idea, corresponding to that of a debt, which another person might pay; and as this pecuniary idea corresponds again with the system of second redemptions, obtained through the means of money given to the church for

pardons, the probability is, that the same persons fabricated both one and the other of those theories; and that, in truth, there is no such thing as redemption; that it is fabulous, and that man stands in the same relative condition with his Maker he ever did stand, since man existed, and that it is his greatest consolation to think so.

Let him believe this, and he will live more consistently and morally, than by any other system; it is by his being taught to contemplate himself as an out-law, as an out-cast, as a beggar, as a mumper, as one thrown, as it were, on a dunghill, at an immense distance from his Creator, and who must make his approaches by creeping and cringing to intermediate beings, that he conceives either a contemptuous disregard for every thing under the name of religion, or becomes indifferent, or turns, what he calls, devout. In the latter case, he consumes his life in grief, or the affectation of it; his prayers are reproaches; his humility is ingratitude; he calls himself a worm, and the fertile earth a dunghill; and all the blessings of life, by the thankless name of vanities; he despises the choicest gift of God to man, the GIFT OF REASON; and having endeavoured to force upon himself the belief of a system against which reason revolts, he ungratefully calls it *human reason*, as if man could give reason to himself.

Yet, with all this strange appearance of humility, and this contempt for human reason, he ventures into the boldest presumptions; he finds fault with every thing; his selfishness is never satisfied; his ingratitude is never at an end. He takes on himself to direct the Almighty what to do, even in the government of the universe; he prays dictatorially; when it is sun-shine, he prays for rain, and when it is rain, he prays for sun-shine; he follows the same idea in every thing that he prays for; for what is the amount of all his prayers, but an attempt to make the Almighty change his mind, and act otherwise than he does? It is as if he were to say—thou know'st not so well as I.

But some perhaps will say—Are we to have no word of God—no revelation! I answer, Yes: there is a word of God; there is a revelation.

THE WORD OF GOD IS THE CREATION WE BEHOLD: And it is in *this word*, which no human invention can counterfeit or alter, that God speaketh universally to man.

Human language is local and changeable, and is therefore incapable of being used as the means of unchangeable and universal information. The idea that God sent Jesus Christ to publish, as they say, the glad tidings to all nations, from one end of the earth to the other, is consistent only with the ignorance of those who knew nothing of the extent of the world, and who believed, as those world-saviours believed, and continued to believe, for several centuries, (and that in contradiction to the discoveries of philosophers and the experience of navigators,) that the earth was flat like a trencher; and that a man might walk to the end of it.

But how was Jesus Christ to make any thing known to all nations? He could speak but one language, which was Hebrew; and there are in the world several hundred languages. Scarcely any two nations speak the same language, or understand each other; and as to translations, every man who knows any thing of languages, knows that it was impossible to translate from one language to another, not only without losing a great part of the original, but frequently of mistaking the sense; and besides all this, the art of printing was wholly unknown at the time Christ lived.

It is always necessary that the means that are to accomplish any end, be equal to the accomplishment of that end, or the end cannot be accomplished. It is in this, that the difference between finite and infinite power and wisdom discovers itself. Man frequently fails in accomplishing his ends, from a natural inability of the power to the purpose; and frequently from the want of wisdom to apply power properly. But it is impossible for infinite power and wisdom to fail as man faileth. The means it useth are always equal to the end; but human language, more especially as there is not an universal language, is incapable of being used as an universal means of unchangeable and uniform information, and therefore it is not the means that God useth in manifesting himself universally to man.

It is only in the CREATION that all our ideas and conceptions of a *word of God* can unite. The Creation speaketh an universal language, independently of human speech or human language, multiplied and various as they be. It is an ever-existing original, which every man can read. It cannot be forged; it cannot be counterfeited; it cannot be lost; it cannot be altered; it cannot be suppressed. It does not depend upon the will of man whether it shall be published or not; it publishes itself from one end of the

earth to the other. It preaches to all nations and to all worlds; and this *word of God* reveals to man all that is necessary for man to know of God.

Do we want to contemplate his power? We see it in the immensity of the Creation. Do we want to contemplate his wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible whole is governed. Do we want to contemplate his munificence? We see it in the abundance with which he fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate his mercy? We see it in his not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful. In fine, do we want to know what God is? Search not the book called the Scripture, which any human hand might make, but the Scripture called the Creation.

The only idea man can affix to the name of God, is that of a *first cause*, the cause of all things. And, incomprehensible and difficult as it is for a man to conceive what a first cause is, he arrives at the belief of it, from the tenfold greater difficulty of disbelieving it. It is difficult beyond description to conceive that space can have no end; but it is more difficult to conceive an end. It is difficult beyond the power of man to conceive an eternal duration of what we call time; but it is more impossible to conceive a time when there shall be no time.

In like manner of reasoning, every thing we behold carries in itself the internal evidence that it did not make itself. Every man is an evidence to himself, that he did not make himself; neither could his father make himself, nor his grandfather, nor any of his race; neither could any tree, plant, or animal make itself; and it is the conviction arising from this evidence, that carries us on, as it were, by necessity, to the belief of a first cause eternally existing, of a nature totally different to any material existence we know of, and by the power of which all things exist; and this first cause man calls God.

It is only by the exercise of reason, that man can discover God. Take away that reason, and he would be incapable of understanding any thing; and, in this case it would be just as consistent to read even the book called the Bible to a horse as to a man. How then is it that those people pretend to reject reason?

Almost the only parts in the book called the Bible, that convey to us any idea of God, are some chapters in Job, and the 19th

Psalm; I recollect no other. Those parts are true *deistical* compositions; for they treat of the *Deity* through his works. They take the book of Creation as the word of God, they refer to no other book, and all the inferences they make are drawn from that volume.

I insert, in this place, the 19th Psalm, as paraphrased into English verse by Addison. I recollect not the prose, and where I write this I have not the opportunity of seeing it.

The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue etherial sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great original proclaim.
The unwearied sun, from day to day,
Does his Creator's power display;
And publishes to every land,
The work of an Almighty hand.
Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And nightly to the listning earth,
Repeats the story of her birth;
Whilst all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets, in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.
What though in solemn silence all
Move round this dark terrestrial ball;
What though no real voice, nor sound,
Amidst their radient orbs be found,
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice,
For ever singing as they shine,
THE HAND THAT MADE US IS DIVINE.

What more does man want to know, than that the hand or power, that made these things is divine, is omnipotent? Let him believe this with the force it is impossible to repel, if he permits his reason to act, and his rule of moral life will follow of course.

The allusions in Job have all of them the same tendency with this Psalm; that of deducing or proving a truth that would be otherwise unknown, from truths already known.

I recollect not enough of the passages in Job, to insert them correctly: but there is one occurs to me that is applicable to the subject I am speaking upon. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?"

I know not how the printers have pointed this passage, for I keep no Bible; but it contains two distinct questions, that admit of distinct answers.

First—Canst thou by searching find out God? Yes; because in the first place, I know I did not make myself, and yet I have existence; and by *searching* into the nature of other things, I find that no other thing could make itself; and yet millions of other things exist; therefore it is, that I know, by positive conclusion resulting from this search, that there is a power superior to all those things, and that power is God.

Secondly—Canst thou find out the Almighty to *perfection?* No; not only because the power and wisdom He has manifested in the structure of the Creation that I behold is to me incomprehensible, but because even this manifestation, great as it is, is probably but a small display of that immensity of power and wisdom, by which millions of other worlds, to me invisible by their distance, were created and continue to exist.

It is evident that both of these questions are put to the reason of the person to whom they are supposed to have been addressed; and it is only by admitting the first question to be answered affirmatively, that the second could follow. It would have been unnecessary, and even absurd, to have put a second question, more difficult than the first, if the first question had been answered negatively. The two questions have different objects; the first refers to the existence of God, the second to his attributes; reason can discover the one, but it falls infinitely short in discovering the whole of the other.

I recollect not a single passage in all the writings ascribed to the men called apostles, that convey any idea of what God is. Those writings are chiefly controversial; and the subject they dwell upon, that of a man dying in agony on a cross, is better suited to the gloomy genius of a monk in a cell, by whom it is not impossible they were written, than to any man breathing the open air of the Creation. The only passage that occurs to me, that has any reference to the works of God, by which only his power and wisdom can be known, is related to have been spoken by Jesus Christ, as a remedy against distrustful care. "Behold the lilies of the field, they toil not, neither do they spin." This, however, is far inferior to the allusions in Job, and in the 19th Psalm; but

it is similar in idea, and the modesty of the imagery is correspondent to the modesty of the man.

As to the Christian system of faith, it appears to me as a species of atheism—a sort of religious denial of God. It professes to believe in a man rather than in God. It is a compound made up chiefly of manism with but little deism, and is as near to atheism as twilight is to darkness. It introduces between man and his Maker an opaque body, which it calls a Redeemer, as the moon introduces her opaque self between the earth and the sun, and it produces by this means a religious or an irreligious eclipse of light. It has put the whole orbit of reason into shade.

The effect of this obscurity has been that of turning every thing upside down, and representing it in reverse ; and among the revolutions it has thus magically produced, it has made a revolution in Theology.

That which is now called natural philosophy, embracing the whole circle of science, of which Astronomy occupies the chief place, is the study of the works of God, and of the power and wisdom of God in his works, and is the true theology.

As to the theology that is now studied in its place, it is the study of human opinions, and of human fancies *concerning* God. It is not the study of God himself in the works that he has made, but in the works or writings that man has made; and it is not among the least of the mischiefs that the Christian system has done to the world, that it has abandoned the original and beautiful system of theology, like a beautiful innocent, to distress and reproach, to make room for the hag of superstition.

The book of Job, and the 19th Psalm, which even the church admits to be more ancient than the chronological order in which they stand in the book called the Bible, are theological orations conformable to the original system of theology. The internal evidence of those orations proves to a demonstration that the study and contemplation of the works of Creation, and of the power and wisdom of God, revealed and manifested in those works, made a great part of the religious devotion of the times in which they were written; and it was this devotional study and contemplation that led to the discovery of the principles upon which, what are now called Sciences, are established ; and it is to the discovery of these principles that almost all the Arts that contribute to the convenience of human life, owe their existence.

Every principal art has some science for its parent, though the person who mechanically performs the work does not always, and but very seldom, perceive the connexion.

It is a fraud of the Christian system to call the sciences *human invention;* it is only the application of them that is human. Every science has for its basis a system of principles as fixed and unalterable as those by which the universe is regulated and governed. Man cannot make principles, he can only discover them.

For example—Every person who looks at an Almanack sees an account when an eclipse will take place, and he sees also that it never fails to take place according to the account there given. This shows that man is acquainted with the laws by which the heavenly bodies move. But it would be something worse than ignorance, were any church on earth to say, that those laws are a human invention. It would also be ignorance, or something worse, to say that the scientific principles, by the aid of which man is enabled to calculate and foreknow when an eclipse will take place, are a human invention. Man cannot invent and thing that is eternal and immutable; and the scientific principles he employs for this purpose must, and are, of necessity, as eternal and immutable as the laws by which the heavenly bodies move, or they could not be used as they are to ascertain the time when, and the manner how, an eclipse will take place.

The scientific principles that man employs to obtain the foreknowledge of an eclipse, or of any thing else, relating to the motion of the heavenly bodies, are contained chiefly in that part of science which is called Trigonometry, or the properties of a triangle, which when applied to the study of the heavenly bodies, is called Astronomy; when applied to direct the course of a ship on the ocean, it is called Navigation; when applied to the construction of figures drawn by rule and compass, it is called Geometry; when applied to the construction of plans of edifices, it is called Architecture; when applied to the measurement of any portion of the surface of the earth, it is called Land-surveying. In fine, it is the soul of science; it is an eternal truth; it contains the *mathematical demonstration* of which man speaks, and the extent of its uses is unknown.

It may be said, that man can make or draw a triangle, and therefore a triangle is an human invention.

But the triangle, when drawn, is no other than the image of the principle; it is a delineation to the eye, and from thence to the mind, of a principle that would otherwise be imperceptible. The triangle does not make the principle, any more than a candle taken into a room that was dark, makes the chairs and tables that before were invisible. All the properties of a triangle exist independently of the figure, and existed before any triangle was drawn or thought of by man. Man had no more to do in the formation of those properties or principles, than he had to do in making the laws by which the heavenly bodies move; and therefore the one must have the same divine origin as the other.

In the same manner as it may be said, that man can make a triangle, so also may it be said, he can make the mechanical instrument called a lever; but the principle, by which the lever acts, is a thing distinct from the instrument, and would exist if the instrument did not: it attaches itself to the instrument after it is made; the instrument, therefore, can act no otherwise than it does act; neither can all the efforts of human invention make it act otherwise—that which, in all such cases, man calls the *effect*, is no other than the principle itself rendered perceptible to the senses.

Since then man cannot make principles, from whence did he gain a knowledge of them, so as to be able to apply them, not only to things on earth, but to ascertain the motion of bodies so immensely distant from him as all the heavenly bodies are? From whence, I ask, *could* he gain that knowledge, but from the study of the true theology?

It is the structure of the universe that has taught this knowledge to man. That structure is an ever-existing exhibition of every principle upon which every part of mathematical science is founded. The offspring of this science is mechanics; for mechanics is no other than the principles of science applied practically. The man who proportions the several parts of a mill, uses the same scientific principles, as if he had the power of constructing an universe; but as he cannot give to matter that invisible agency, by which all the components parts of the immense machine of the universe have influenced upon each other and act in motional unison together, without any apparent contact, and to which man has given the name of attraction, gravitation, and repulsion, he supplies the place of that agency by the humble imi-

tation of teeth and cogs.—All the parts of man's microcosm must visibly touch: but could he gain a knowledge of that agency, so as to be able to apply it in practice, we might then say, that another *canonical book* of the word of God had been discovered.

If man could alter the properties of the lever, so also could he alter the properties of the triangle: for a lever (taking that sort of lever which is called a steel-yard, for the sake of explanation) forms, when in motion, a triangle. The line it descends from, (one point of that line being in the fulcrum,) the line it descends to, and the cord of the arc, which the end of the lever describes in the air, are the three sides of a triangle. The other arm of the lever describes also a triangle; and the corresponding sides of those two triangles, calculated scientifically, or measured geometrically: and also the sines, tangents, and secants generated from the angles, and geometrically measured, have the same proportions to each other, as the different weights have that will balance each other on the lever, leaving the weight of the lever out of the case.

It may also be said, that man can make a wheel and axis; that he can put wheels of different magnitudes together, and produce a mill. Still the case comes back to the same point, which is, that he did not make the principle that gives the wheels those powers. That principle is as unalterable as in the former case, or rather it is the same principle under a different appearance to the eye.

The power that two wheels, of different magnitudes, have upon each other, is in the same proportion as if the semi-diameter of the two wheels were joined together and made into that kind of lever I have described, suspended at the part where the semi-diameters join; for the two wheels, scientifically considered, are no other than the two circles generated by the motion of the compound lever.

It is from the study of the true theology that all our knowledge of science is derived, and it is from that knowledge that all the arts have originated.

The Almighty lecturer, by displaying the principles of science in the structure of the universe, has invited man to study and to imitation. It is as if he had said to the inhabitants of this globe, that we call ours, "I have made an earth for man to dwell upon, and I have rendered the starry heavens visible, to teach him science and the arts. He can now provide for his own comfort

AND LEARN FROM MY MUNIFCIENCE TO ALL, TO BE KIND TO EACH OTHER."

Of what use is it, unless it be to teach man something, that his eye is endowed with the power of beholding, to an incomprehensible distance, an immensity of worlds revolving in the ocean of space? Or of what use is it that this immensity of worlds is visible to man? What has man to do with the Pleiades, with Orion, with Sirius, with the star he calls the north star, with the moving orbs he has named Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Mercury, if no uses are to follow from their being visible? A less power of vision would have been sufficient for man, if the immensity he now possesses were given only to waste itself, as it were, on an immense desert of space glittering with shows.

It is only by contemplating what he calls the starry heavens, as the book and school of science, that he discovers any use in their being visible to him, or any advantage resulting from his immensity of vision. But when he contemplates the subject in this light, he sees an additional motive for saying, that *nothing was made in vain;* for in vain would be this power of vision if it taught man nothing.

As the Christian system of faith has made a revolution in theology, so also has it made a revolution in the state of learning. That which is now called learning, was not learning, originally. Learning does not consist, as the schools now make it consist, in the knowledge of languages, but in the knowledge of things to which language gives names.

The Greeks were a learned people, but learning with them did not consist in speaking Greek, any more than in a Roman's speaking Latin, or a Frenchman's speaking French, or an Englishman's speaking English. From what we know of the Greeks, it does not appear that they knew or studied any language but their own, and this was one cause of their becoming so learned; it afforded them more time to apply themselves to better studies. The schools of the Greeks were schools of science and philosophy, and not of languages; and it is in the knowledge of the things that science and philosophy teach, that learning consists.

Almost all the scientific learning that now exists, came to us from the Greeks, or the people who spoke the Greek language.—It, therefore, became necessary for the people of other nations, who spoke a different language, that some among them should

learn the Greek language, in order that the learning the Greeks had, might be made known in those nations, by translating the Greek books of science and philosophy into the mother tongue of each nation.

The study, therefore, of the Greek language (and in the same manner for the Latin) was no other than the drudgery business of a linguist; and the language thus obtained, was no other than the means, as it were the tools, employed to obtain the learning the Greeks had. It made no part of the learning itself; and was so distinct from it, as to make it exceedingly probable that the persons who had studied Greek sufficiently to translate those works, such, for instance, as Euclid's Elements, did not understand any of the learning the works contained.

As there is now nothing new to be learned from the dead languages, all the useful books being already translated, the languages are become useless, and the time expended in teaching and learning them is wasted. So far as the study of languages may contribute to the progress and communication of knowledge, (for it has nothing to do with the *creation* of knowledge,) it is only in the living languages that new knowledge is to be found; and certain it is, that, in general, a youth will learn more of a living language in one year, than of a dead language in seven; and it is but seldom that the teacher knows much of it himself. The difficulty of learning the dead languages does not arise from any superior abstruseness in the languages themselves, but in their *being dead*, and the pronunciation entirely lost. It would be the same thing with any other language when it becomes dead. The best Greek linguist that now exists, does not understand Greek so well as a Grecian ploughman did, or a Grecian milkmaid: and the same for the Latin, compared with a ploughman or milkmaid of the Romans; it would therefore be advantageous to the state of learning to abolish the study of the dead languages, and to make learning consist, as it originally did, in scientific knowledge.

The apology that is sometimes made for continuing to teach the dead languages is, that they are taught at a time, when a child is not capable of exerting any other mental faculty than that of memory; but that is altogether erroneous. The human mind has a natural disposition to scientific knowledge, and to the things connected with it. The first and favourite amusement of a child, even before it begins to play, is that of imitating the works of man,

It builds houses with cards or sticks; it navigates the little ocean of a bowl of water with a paper boat, or dams the stream of a gutter, and contrives something which it calls a mill; and it interests itself in the fate of its works with a care that resembles affection. It afterwards goes to school, where its genius is killed by the barren study of a dead language, and the philosopher is lost in the linguist.

But the apology that is now made for continuing to teach the dead languages, could not be the cause, at first, of cutting down learning to the narrow and humble sphere of linguistry; the cause, therefore, must be sought for elsewhere. In all researches of this kind, the best evidence that can be produced, is the internal evidence the thing carries with itself, and the evidence of circumstances that unites with it; both of which, in this case, are not difficult to be discovered.

Putting then aside, as a matter of distinct consideration, the outrage offered to the moral justice of God, by supposing him to make the innocent suffer for the guilty, and also the loose morality and low contrivance of supposing him to change himself into the shape of a man, in order to make an excuse to himself for not executing his supposed sentence upon Adam; putting, I say, those things aside as matter of distinct consideration, it is certain that what is called the Christian system of faith, including in it the whimsical account of the creation—the strange story of Eve—the snake and the apple—the ambiguous idea of a man-god—the corporeal idea of the death of a god—the mythological idea of a family of gods, and the Christian system of arithmetic, that three are one, and one is three, are all irreconcilable, not only to the divine gift of reason, that God hath given to Man, but to the knowledge that man gains of the power and wisdom of God, by the aid of the sciences, and by studying the structure of the universe that God has made.

The setters-up, therefore, and the advocates of the Christian system of faith, could not but foresee that the continually progressive knowledge that man would gain, by the aid of science, of the power and wisdom of God, manifested in the structure of the universe, and in all the works of Creation, would militate against, and call into question, the truth of their system of faith; and therefore it became necessary to their purpose to cut learning down to a size less dangerous to their project, and this they

effected by restricting the idea of learning to the dead study of dead languages.

They not only rejected the study of science out of the Christian schools, but they persecuted it; and it is only within about the last two centuries that the study has been revived. So late as 1610, Galileo, a Florentine, discovered and introduced the use of telescopes, and by applying them to observe the motions and appearance of the heavenly bodies, afforded additional means for ascertaining the true structure of the universe. Instead of being esteemed for those discoveries, he was sentenced to renounce them, or the opinions resulting from them, as a damnable heresy. And, prior to that time, Vigilius was condemned to be burned for asserting the antipodes, or in other words, that the earth was a globe, and habitable in every part where there was land; yet the truth of this is now too well known even to be told.

If the belief of errors not morally bad did no mischief, it would make no part of the moral duty of man to oppose and remove them. There was no moral ill in believing the earth was flat like a trencher, any more than there was moral virtue in believing that it was round like a globe; neither was there any moral ill in believing that the Creator made no other world than this, any more than there was moral virtue in believing that he made millions, and that the infinity of space is filled with worlds. But when a system of religion is made to grow out of a supposed system of creation that is not true, and to unite itself therewith in a manner almost inseparable therefrom, the case assumes an entirely different ground. It is then that errors, not morally bad, become fraught with the same mischiefs as if they were. It is then that the truth, though otherwise indifferent itself, becomes an essential, by becoming the criterion, that either confirms by corresponding evidence, or denies by contradictory evidence, the reality of the religion itself. In this view of the case, it is the moral duty of man to obtain every possible evidence that the structure of the heavens, or any other part of creation affords, with respect to systems of religion. But this, the supporters or partizans of the Christian system, as if dreading the result, incessantly opposed, and not only rejected the sciences, but persecuted the professors. Had Newton or Descartes lived three or four hundred years ago, and pursued their studies as they did, it is most probable they would not have lived to finish them; and had

Franklin drawn lightning from the clouds at the same time, it would have been at the hazard of expiring for it in flames.

Later times have laid all the blame upon the Goths and Vandals; but, however unwilling the partizans of the Christian system may be to believe or to acknowledge it, it is nevertheless true, that the age of ignorance commenced with the Christian system.—There was more knowledge in the world before that period, than for many centuries afterwards; and as to religious knowledge, the Christian system, as already said, was only another species of mythology; and the mythology to which it succeeded, was a corruption of an ancient system of theism.*

It is owing to this long interregnum of science, *and to no other cause*, that we have now to look through a vast chasm of many hundred years to the respectable characters we call the ancients.—Had the progression of knowledge gone on proportionably with the stock that before existed, that chasm would have been filled up with characters rising superior in knowledge to each other; and those ancients we now so much admire, would have appeared respectably in the back ground of the scene. But the Christian system laid all waste; and if we take our stand about the beginning of the sixteenth century, we look back through that long chasm, to the times of the ancients, as over a vast sandy desart, in which not a shrub appears to intercept the vision to the fertile hills beyond.

* It is impossible for us now to know at what time the heathen mythology began; but it is certain, from the internal evidence that it carries, that it did not begin in the same state or condition in which it ended. All the gods of that mythology, except Saturn, were of modern invention. The supposed reign of Saturn was prior to that which is called the heathen mythology, and was so far a species of theism, that it admitted the belief of only one God. Saturn is supposed to have abdicated the government in favor of his three sons and one daughter, Jupiter, Pluto, Neptune, and Juno; after this, thousands of other gods and demi-gods were imaginarily created, and the calendar of gods increased as fast as the calendar of saints, and the calendars of courts have increased since.

All the corruptions that have taken place, in theology and in religion, have been produced by admitting of what man calls *revealed religion*. The Mythologists pretended to more revealed religion than the Christians do. They had their oracles and their priests, who were supposed to receive and deliver the word of God verbally, on almost all occasions.

Since then all corruptions down from Molock to modern predestinarianism, and the human sacrifices of the heathens to the Christian sacrifice of the Creator, have been produced by admitting of what is called *revealed religion*, the most effectual means to prevent all such evils and impositions is, not to admit of any other revelation than that which is manifested in the book of creation, and to contemplate the creation as the only true and real work of God that ever did, or ever will exist; and that every thing else, called the word of God, is fable and imposition.

It is an inconsistency scarcely possible to be credited, that any thing should exist, under the name of a religion, that held it to be *irreligious* to study and contemplate the structure of the universe that God had made. But the fact is too well established to be denied. The event that served more than any other to break the first link in this long chain of despotic ignorance, is that known by the name of the Reformation by Luther. From that time, though it does not appear to have made any part of the intention of Luther, or of those who are called reformers, the sciences began to revive, and liberality, their natural associate, began to appear. This was the only public good the Reformation did; for, with respect to religious good, it might as well not have taken place. The mythology still continued the same; and a multiplicity of National Popes grew out of the downfall of the Pope of Christendom.

Having thus shown from the internal evidence of things, the cause that produced a change in the state of learning, and the motive for substituting the study of dead languages, in the place of the sciences, I proceed, in addition to the several observations, already made in the former part of this work, to compare, or rather to confront the evidence that the structure of the universe affords, with the Christian system of religion; but, as I cannot begin this part better than by referring to the ideas that occurred to me at an early part of life, and which I doubt not have occurred in some degree to almost every other person at one time or other, I shall state what those ideas were, and add thereto such other matter as shall arise out of the subject, giving to the whole, by way of preface, a short introduction.

My father being of the Quaker profession, it was my good fortune to have an exceeding good moral education, and a tolerable stock of useful learning. Though I went to the grammar school,* I did not learn Latin, not only because I had no inclination to learn languages, but because of the objection the Quakers have against the books in which the language is taught. But this did not prevent me from being acquainted with the subjects of all the Latin books used in the school.

The natural bent of my mind was to science. I had some

* The same school, Thetford in Norfolk, that the present Counsellor Mingay went to, and under the same master.

turn, and I believe some talent for poetry; but this I rather repressed than encouraged, as leading too much into the field of imagination. As soon as I was able, I purchased a pair of globes, and attended the philosophical lectures of Martin and Ferguson, and became afterwards acquainted with Dr. Bevis, of the society, called the Royal Society, then living in the Temple, and an excellent astronomer.

I had no disposition for what is called politics. It presented to my mind no other idea than is contained in the word Jockeyship. When, therefore, I turned my thoughts towards matters of government, I had to form a system for myself, that accorded with the moral and philosophic principles in which I had been educated. I saw or at least I thought I saw, a vast scene opening itself to the world in the affairs of America; and it appeared to me, that unless the Americans changed the plan they were then pursuing, with respect to the government of England, and declared themselves independent, they would not only involve themselves in a multiplicity of new difficulties, but shut out the prospect that was then offering itself to mankind through their means. It was from these motives that I published the work known by the name of "*Common Sense*," which is the first work I ever did publish; and so far as I can judge of myself, I believe I should never have been known in the world as an author, on any subject whatever, had it not been for the affairs of America. I wrote "*Common Sense*" the latter end of the year 1775, and published it the first of January, 1776. Independence was declared the fourth of July following.

Any person, who has made observations on the state and progress of the human mind, by observing his own, cannot but have observed, that there are two distinct classes of what are called Thoughts; those that we produce in ourselves by reflection and the act of thinking, and those that bolt into the mind of their own accord. I have always made it a rule to treat those voluntary visitors with civility, taking care to examine, as well as I was able, if they were worth entertaining; and it is from them I have acquired almost all the knowledge that I have. As to the learning that any person gains from school education, it serves only, like a small capital, to put him in the way of beginning learning for himself afterwards.—Every person of learning is finally his own teacher, the reason of which is, that principles, being of a distinct

quality to circumstances, cannot be impressed upon the memory; their place of mental residence is the understanding, and they are never so lasting as when they begin by conception. Thus much for the introductory part.

From the time I was capable of conceiving an idea, and acting upon it by reflection, I either doubted the truth of the Christian system, or thought it to be a strange affair; I scarcely knew which it was: but I well remember, when about seven or eight years of age, hearing a sermon read by a relation of mine, who was a great devotee of the church, upon the subject of what is called *redemption by the death of the Son of God.* After the sermon was ended, I went into the garden, and as I was going down the garden steps (for I perfectly recollect the spot) I revolted at the recollection of what I had heard, and thought to myself that it was making God Almighty act like a passionate man, that killed his son, when he could not revenge himself any other way; and as I was sure a man would be hanged that did such a thing, I could not see for what purpose they preached such sermons. This was not one of those kind of thoughts that had any thing in it of childish levity; it was to me a serious reflection, arising from the idea I had, that God was too good to do such an action, and also too almighty to be under any necessity of doing it. I believe in the same manner at this moment; and I moreover believe, that any system of religion that has any thing in it that shocks the mind of a child, cannot be a true system.

It seems as if parents of the Christian profession were ashamed to tell their children any thing about the principles of their religion. They sometimes instruct them in morals, and talk to them of the goodness of what they call Providence; for the Christian mythology has five deities—there is God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, the God Providence, and the Goddess Nature. But the Christian story of God the Father putting his son to death, or employing people to do it, (for that is the plain language of the story,) cannot be told by a parent to a child; and to tell him that it was done to make mankind happier and better, is making the story still worse, as if mankind could be improved by the example of murder; and to tell him that all this is a mystery, is only making an excuse for the incredibility of it.

How different is this to the pure and simple profession of Deism! The true Deist has but one Deity; and his religion

consists in contemplating the power, wisdom, and benignity of the Deity in his works, and in endeavoring to imitate him in every thing moral, scientifical, and mechanical.

The religion that approaches the nearest of all others to true Deism, in the moral and benign part thereof, is that professed by the Quakers: but they have contracted themselves too much, by leaving the works of God out of their system. Though I reverence their philanthropy, I cannot help smiling at the conceit, that if the taste of a Quaker could have been consulted at the creation, what a silent and drab-colored creation it would have been! Not a flower would have blossomed its gaities, nor a bird been permitted to sing.

Quitting these reflections, I proceed to other matters. After I had made myself master of the use of the globes, and of the orrery,* and conceived an idea of the infinity of space, and the eternal divisibility of matter, and obtained, at least, a general knowledge of what is called natural philosophy, I began to compare, or, as I have before said, to confront the eternal evidence those things afford with the Christian system of faith.

Though it is not a direct article of the Christian system, that this world that we inhabit, is the whole of the habitable creation, yet it is so worked up therewith, from what is called the Mosaic account of the Creation, the story of Eve and the apple, and the counterpart of that story, the death of the Son of God, that to believe otherwise, that is, to believe that God created a plurality of worlds, at least as numerous as what we call stars, renders the Christian system of faith at once little and ridiculous, and scatters it in the mind like feathers in the air. The two beliefs cannot be held together in the same mind; and he who thinks that he believes both, has thought but little of either.

Though the belief of a plurality of worlds was familar to the ancients, it is only within the last three centuries that the extent and dimensions of this globe that we inhabit have been ascertained.—

* As this book may fall into the hands of persons who do not know what an orrery is, it is for their information I add this note, as the name gives no idea of the uses of the thing. The orrery has its name from the person who invented it. It is a machinery of clock-work, representing the universe in miniature, and in which the revolution of the earth round itself and round the sun, the revolution of the moon round the earth, the revolution of the planets round the sun, their relative distances from the sun, as the centre of the whole system, their relative distances from each other, and their different magnitudes, are represented as they really exist in what we call the heavens.

Several vessels, following the tract of the ocean, have sailed entirely round the world, as a man may march in a circle, and come round by the contrary side of the circle to the spot he set out from. The circular dimensions of our world, in the widest part, as a man would measure the widest round of an apple, or a ball, is only twenty-five thousand and twenty English miles, reckoning sixty-nine miles and an half to an equatorial degree, and may be sailed round in the space of about three years.*

A world of this extent may, at first thought, appear to us to be great; but if we compare it with the immensity of space in which it is suspended, like a bubble or balloon in the air, it is infinitely less, in proportion, than the smallest grain of sand is to the size of the world, or the finest particle of dew to the whole ocean, and is therefore but small; and, as will be hereafter shown, is only one of a system of worlds, of which the universal creation is composed.

It is not difficult to gain some faint idea of the immensity of space in which this and all the other worlds are suspended, if we follow a progression of ideas. When we think of the size or dimensions of a room, our ideas limit themselves to the walls, and there they stop; but when our eye, or our imagination darts into space, that is, when it looks upwards into what we call the open air, we cannot conceive any walls or boundaries it can have; and if for the sake of resting our ideas, we suppose a boundary, the question immediately renews itself, and asks, what is beyond that boundary? and in the same manner, what beyond the next boundary? and so on till the fatigued imagination returns and says, *there is no end.* Certainly, then, the Creator was not pent for room, when he made this world no larger than it is; and we have to seek the reason in something else.

If we take a survey of our own world, or rather of this, of which the Creator has given us the use, as our portion in the immense system of Creation, we find every part of it, the earth, the waters, and the air that surrounds it, filled, and, as it were, crowded with life, down from the largest animals that we know of to the smallest insects the naked eye can behold, and from thence to others still

* Allowing a ship to sail, on an average, three miles in an hour, she would sail entirely round the world in less than one year, if she could sail in a direct circle; but she is obliged to follow the course of the ocean.

smaller, and totally invisible without the assistance of the microscope. Every tree, every plant, every leaf, serves not only as an habitation, but as a world to some numerous race, till animal existence becomes so exceedingly refined, that the effluvia of a blade of grass would be food for thousands.

Since then no part of our earth is left unoccupied, why is it to be supposed that the immensity of space is a naked void, lying in eternal waste? There is room for millions of worlds as large or larger than ours, and each of them millions of miles apart from each other.

Having now arrived at this point, if we carry our ideas only one thought further, we shall see, perhaps, the true reason, at least a very good reason, for our happiness, why the Creator, instead of making one immense world, extending over an immense quantity of space, has preferred dividing that quantity of matter into several distinct and separate worlds, which we call planets, of which our earth is one. But before I explain my ideas upon this subject, it is necessary (not for the sake of those that already know, but for those who do not) to show what the system of the universe is.

That part of the universe that is called the solar system (meaning the system of worlds to which our earth belongs, and of which Sol, or in English language, the Sun, is the centre) consists, besides the Sun, of six distinct orbs, or planets, or worlds, besides the secondary bodies, called the satellites or moons, of which our earth has one that attends her in her annual revolution round the Sun, in like manner as other sattelites or moons, attend the planets or worlds to which they severally belong, as may be seen by the assistance of the telescope.

The Sun is the centre, round which those six worlds or planets revolve at different distances therefrom, and in circles concentrate to each other. Each world keeps constantly in nearly the same track round the Sun, and continues, at the same time, turning round itself, in nearly an upright position, as a top turns round itself when it is spinning on the ground, and leans a little sideways.

It is this leaning of the earth (23½ degrees) that occasions summer and winter, and the different length of days and nights. If the earth turned round itself in a position perpendicular to the plane or level of the circle it moves in around the Sun, as a top turns round

when it stands erect on the ground, the days and nights would be always of the same length, twelve hours day and twelve hours night, and the seasons would be uniformly the same throughout the year.

Every time that a planet (our earth for example) turns round itself, it makes what we call day and night; and every time it goes entirely round the Sun, it makes what we call a year, consequently our world turns three hundred and sixty-five times round itself, in going once round the Sun.*

The names that the ancients gave to those six worlds, and which are still called by the same names, are Mercury, Venus, this world that we call ours, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. They appear larger to the eye than the stars, being many million miles nearer to our earth than any of the stars are. The planet Venus is that which is called the evening star, and sometimes the morning star, as she happens to set after, or rise before the Sun, which, in either case, is never more than three hours.

The Sun, as before said, being the centre, the planet, or world, nearest the Sun, is Mercury; his distance from the Sun is thirty-four million miles, and he moves round in a circle always at that distance from the Sun, as a top may be supposed to spin round in the track in which a horse goes in a mill. The second world is Venus, she is fifty-seven million miles distant from the Sun, and consequently moves round in a circle much greater than that of Mercury. The third world is that we inhabit, and which is eighty-eight million miles distant from the Sun, and consequently moves round in a circle greater than that of Venus. The fourth world is Mars, he is distant from the Sun one hundred and thirty-four million miles, and consequently moves round in a circle greater than that of our earth. The fifth is Jupiter, he is distant from the Sun five hundred and fifty-seven million miles, and consequently moves round in a circle greater than that of Mars. The sixth world is Saturn, he is distant from the Sun seven hundred and sixty-three million miles, and consequently moves round in a circle that surrounds the circles, or orbits, of all the other worlds or planets.

The space, therefore, in the air, or in the immensity of space, that our solar system takes up for the several worlds to perform

* Those who supposed that the Sun went round the earth every 24 hours, made the same mistake in idea that a cook would do in fact, that should make the fire go round the meat, instead of the meat turning round itself towards the fire.

their revolutions in round the Sun, is of the extent in a straight line of the whole diameter of the orbit or cicle, in which Saturn moves round the Sun, which being double his distance from the Sun, is fifteen hundred and twenty-six million miles: and its circular extent is nearly five thousand million; and its globical content is almost three thousand five hundred million times three thousand five hundred million square miles.*

But this, immense as it is, is only one system of worlds. Beyond this, at a vast distance into space, far beyond all power of calculation, are the stars called the fixed stars. They are called fixed, because they have no revolutionary motion, as the six worlds or planets have that I have been describing. Those fixed stars continue always at the same distance from each other, and always in the same place, as the Sun does in the centre of our system. The probability, therefore, is, that each of those fixed stars is also a Sun, round which another system of worlds or planets, though too remote for us to discover, performs its revolutions, as our system of worlds does round our central Sun.

By this easy progression of ideas, the immensity of space will appear to us to be filled with systems of worlds; and that no part of space lies at waste, any more than any part of the globe or earth and water is left unoccupied.

Having thus endeavoured to convey, in a familiar and easy manner, some idea of the structure of the universe, I return to explain what I before alluded to, namely, the great benefits arising to man in consequence of the Creator having made a *plurality* of worlds, such as our system is, consisting of a central Sun and six worlds, besides satellites, in preference to that of creating one world only of a vast extent.

* If it should be asked, how can man know these things? I have one plain answer to give, which is, that man knows how to calculate an eclipse, and also how to calculate to a minute of time when the planet Venus, in making her revolutions round the Sun, will come in a straight line between our earth and the Sun, and will appear to us about the size of a large pea passing across the face of the Sun. This happens but twice in about an hundred years, at the distance of about eight years from each other, and has happened twice in our time, both of which were foreknown by calculation. It can also be known when they will happen again for a thousand years to come, or to any other portion of time. As, therefore, man could not be able to do these things if he did not understand the solar system, and the manner in which the revolutions of the several planets or worlds are performed, the fact of calculating an eclipse, or a transit of Venus, is a proof in point that the knowledge exists; and as to a few thousand, or even a few million miles, more or less, it makes scarcely any sensible difference in such immense distances.

It is an idea I have never lost sight of, that all our knowledge of science is derived from the revolutions (exhibited to our eye, and from thence to our understanding) which those several planets or worlds, of which our system is composed, make in their circuit round the Sun.

Had then the quantity of matter which these six worlds contain been blended into one solitary globe, the consequence to us would have been, that either no revolutionary motion would have existed, or not a sufficiency of it to give us the idea and the knowledge of science we now have; and it is from the sciences that all the mechanical arts that contribute so much to our earthly felicity and comfort, are derived.

As, therefore, the Creator made nothing in vain, so also must it be believed that He organized the structure of the universe in the most advantageous manner for the benefit of man; and as we see, and from experience feel, the benefits we derive from the structure of the universe, formed as it is, which benefits we should not have had the opportunity of enjoying, if the structure, so far as relates to our system, had been a solitary globe—we can discover at least one reason why a *plurality* of worlds has been made, and that reason calls forth the devotional gratitude of man, as well as his admiration.

But it is not to us, the inhabitants of this globe, only, that the benefits arising from a plurality of worlds are limited. The inhabitants of each of the worlds of which our system is composed, enjoy the same opportunities of knowledge as we do. They behold the revolutionary motions of our earth, as we behold theirs. All the planets revolve in sight of each other; and, therefore, the same universal school of science presents itself to all.

Neither does the knowledge stop here. The system of worlds next to us exhibits, in its revolutions, the same principles and school of science, to the inhabitants of their system, as our system does to us, and in like manner throughout the immensity of space.

Our ideas, not only of the almightiness of the Creator, but of his wisdom and his beneficence, become enlarged in proportion as we contemplate the extent and the structure of the universe. The solitary idea of a solitary world, rolling or at rest in the immense ocean of space, gives place to the cheerful idea of a society of worlds, so happily contrived as to administer, even by their motion, instruction to man. We see our own earth filled with abund-

ance; but we forget to consider how much of that abundance is owing to the scientific knowledge the vast machinery of the universe has unfolded.

But, in the midst of those reflections, what are we to think of the Christian system of faith, that forms itself upon the idea of only one world, and that of no greater extent, as is before shown, than twenty-five thousand miles? An extent which a man, walking at the rate of three miles an hour, for twelve hours in the day, could he keep on in a circular direction, would walk entirely round in less than two years. Alas! what is this to the mighty ocean of space, and the almighty power of the Creator!

From whence then could arise the solitary and strange conceit, that the Almighty, who had millions of worlds equally dependent on his protection, should quit the care of all the rest, and come to die in our world, because, they say, one man and one woman had eaten an apple! And, on the other hand, are we to suppose that every world in the boundless creation, had an Eve, an apple, a serpent and a redeemer? In this case, the person who is irreverently called the Son of God, and sometimes God himself, would have nothing else to do than to travel from world to world, in an endless succession of death, with scarcely a momentary interval of life.

It has been by rejecting the evidence, that the word or works of God in the creation affords to our senses, and the action of our reason upon that evidence, that so many wild and whimsical systems of faith, and of religion, have been fabricated and set up. There may be many systems of religion, that so far from being morally bad, are in many respects morally good: but there can be but ONE that is true; and that one necessarily must, as it ever will, be in all things consistent with the ever existing word of God that we behold in his works. But such is the strange construction of the Christian system of faith, that every evidence the Heavens afford to man, either directly contradicts it, or renders it absurd.

It is possible to believe, and I always feel pleasure in encouraging myself to believe it, that there have been men in the world, who persuade themselves that, what is called a *pious fraud*, might, at least under particular circumstances, be productive of some good. But the fraud being once established, could not afterwards

be explained; for it is with a pious fraud as with a bad action, it begets a calamitous necessity of going on.

The persons who first preached the Christian system of faith, and in some measure combined it with the morality preached by Jesus Christ, might persuade themselves that it was better than the heathen mythology that then prevailed. From the first preachers the fraud went on to the second, and to the third, till the idea of its being a pious fraud became lost in the belief of its being true; and that belief became again encouraged by the interests of those who made a livelihood by preaching it.

But though such a belief might, by such means, be rendered almost general among the laity, it is next to impossible to account for the continual persecution carried on by the church, for several hundred years, against the sciences, and against the professors of sciences, if the church had not some record or tradition, that it was originally no other than a pious fraud, or did not foresee, that it could not be maintained against the evidence that the structure of the universe afforded.

Having thus shown the irreconcileable inconsistencies between the real word of God existing in the universe and that which is called *the word of God*, as shown to us in a printed book that any man might make, I proceed to speak of the three principal means that have been employed in all ages, and perhaps in all countries, to impose upon mankind.

Those three means are Mystery, Miracle, and Prophesy. The two first are incompatible with true religion, and the third ought always to be suspected.

With respect to mystery, every thing we behold is, in one sense, a mystery to us. Our own existence is a mystery; the whole vegetable world is a mystery. We cannot account how it is that an acorn, when put into the ground, is made to develope itself, and become an oak. We know not how it is that the seed we sow unfolds and multiplies itself, and returns to us such an abundant interest for so small a capital.

The fact, however, as distinct from the operating cause, is not a mystery, because we see it; and we know also the means we are to use, which is no other than putting seed in the ground.—We know, therefore, as much as is necessary for us to know; and that part of the operation that we do not know, and which if we did, we could not perform, the Creator takes upon himself and

performs it for us. We are, therefore, better off than if we had been let into the secret, and left to do it for ourselves.

But though every created thing is, in this sense, a mystery, the word mystery cannot be applied to *moral truth*, any more than obscurity can be applied to light. The God in whom we believe is a God of moral truth, and not a God of mystery or obscurity. Mystery is the antagonist of truth. It is a fog of human invention, that obscures truth, and represents it in distortion. Truth never envelopes *itself* in mystery; and the mystery in which it is at any time enveloped, is the work of its antagonist, and never of itself.

Religion, therefore, being the belief of a God, and the practice of moral truth, cannot have connection with mystery. The belief of a God, so far from having any thing of mystery in it, is of all beliefs the most easy, because it arises to us, as is before observed, out of necessity. And the practice of moral truth, or, in other words, a practical imitation of the moral goodness of God, is no other than our acting towards each other as he acts benignly towards all. We cannot *serve* God in the manner we serve those who cannot do without such service; and, therefore, the only idea we can have of serving God, is that of contributing to the happiness of the living creation that God has made. This cannot be done by retiring ourselves from the society of the world, and spending a recluse life in selfish devotion.

The very nature and design of religion, if I may so express it, prove, even to demonstration, that it must be free from every thing of mystery, and unincumbered with every thing that is mysterious. Religion, considered as a duty, is incumbent upon every living soul alike, and, therefore, must be on a level to the understanding and comprehension of all. Man does not learn religion as he learns the secrets and mysteries of a trade. He learns the theory of religion by reflection. It arises out of the action of his own mind upon the things which he sees, or upon what he may happen to hear or to read, and the practice joins itself thereto.

When men, whether from policy or pious fraud, set up systems of religion incompatible with the word or works of God in the creation, and not only above, but repugnant to human comprehension, they were under the necessity of inventing or adopting a word that should serve as a bar to all questions, inquiries and speculations. The word *mystery* answered this purpose; and

thus it has happened that religion, which is in itself without mystery, has been corrupted into a fog of mysteries.

As *mystery* answered all general purposes, *miracle* followed as an occasional auxiliary. The former served to bewilder the mind; the latter to puzzle the senses. The one was the lingo, the other the legerdemain.

But before going further into this subject, it will be proper to inquire what is to be understood by a miracle.

In the same sense that every thing may be said to be a mystery, so also may it be said that every thing is a miracle, and that no one thing is a greater miracle than another. The elephant, though larger, is not a greater miracle than a mite; nor a mountain a greater miracle than an atom. To an almighty power, it is no more difficult to make the one than the other; and no more difficult to make a million of worlds than to make one. Every thing, therefore, is a miracle, in one sense, whilst in the other sense, there is no such thing as a miracle. It is a miracle when compared to our power, and to our comprehension; it is not a miracle compared to the power that performs it; but as nothing in this description conveys the idea that is affixed to the word miracle, it is necessary to carry the inquiry further.

Mankind have conceived to themselves certain laws, by which what they call nature is supposed to act; and that a miracle is something contrary to the operation and effect of those laws, but unless we know the whole extent of those laws, and of what are commonly called the powers of nature, we are not able to judge whether any thing that may appear to us wonderful or miraculous, be within, or be beyond, or be contrary to, her natural power of acting.

The ascension of a man several miles high into the air, would have every thing in it that constitutes the idea of a miracle, if it were not known that a species of air can be generated several times lighter than the common atmospheric air, and yet possess elasticity enough to prevent the balloon, in which that light air is enclosed, from being compressed into as many times less bulk, by the common air that surrounds it. In like manner, extracting flames or sparks of fire from the human body, as visible as from a steel struck with a flint, and causing iron or steel to move without any visible agent, would also give the idea of a miracle, if we were not acquainted with electricity and magnetism; so also would many other experiments in natural philosophy, to those

who are not acquainted with the subject. The restoring persons to life, who are to appearance dead, as is practised upon drowned persons, would also be a miracle, if it were not known that animation is capable of being suspended without being extinct.

Besides these, there are performances by slight of hand, and by persons acting in concert, that have a miraculous appearance, which, when known, are thought nothing of. And, besides these, there are mechanical and optical deceptions. There is now an exhibition in Paris of ghosts or spectres, which, though it is not imposed upon the spectators as a fact, has an astonishing appearance. As, therefore, we know not the extent to which either nature or art can go, there is no criterion to determine what a miracle is; and mankind, in giving credit to appearances, under the idea of their being miracles, are subject to be continually imposed upon.

Since then appearances are so capable of deceiving, and things not real have a strong resemblance to things that are, nothing can be more inconsistent than to suppose that the Almighty would make use of means, such as are called miracles, that would subject the person who performed them to the suspicion of being an impostor, and the person who related them to be suspected of lying, and the doctrine intended to be supported thereby to be suspected as a fabulous invention.

Of all the modes of evidence that ever were intended to obtain belief to any system or opinion to which the name of religion has been given, that of miracle, however successful the imposition may have been, is the most inconsistent. For, in the first place, whenever recourse is had to show, for the purpose of procuring that belief, (for a miracle, under any idea of the word, is a show,) it implies a lameness or weakness in the doctrine that is preached. And, in the second place, it is degrading the Almighty into the character of a show-man, playing tricks to amuse and make the people stare and wonder. It is also the most equivocal sort of evidence that can be set up; for the belief is not to depend upon the thing called a miracle, but upon the credit of the reporter, who says that he saw it; and, therefore, the thing, were it true, would have no better chance of being believed than if it were a lie.

Suppose I were to say, that when I sat down to write this book, a hand presented itself in the air, took up the pen and wrote every word that is herein written; would any body believe me? Cer-

tainly they would not. Would they believe me a whit the more if the thing had been a fact; certainly they would not. Since then a real miracle, were it to happen, would be subject to the same fate as the falsehood, the inconsistency becomes the greater, of supposing the Almighty would make use of means that would not answer the purpose for which they were intended, even if they were real.

If we are to suppose a miracle to be something so entirely out of the course of what is called nature, that she must go out of that course to accomplish it, and we see an account given of such miracle by the person who said he saw it, it raises a question in the mind very easily decided, which is, is it more probable that nature should go out of her course, or that a man should tell a lie? We have never seen, in our time, nature go out of her course; but we have good reason to believe that millions of lies have been told in the same time; it is, therefore, at least millions to one, that the reporter of a miracle tells a lie.

The story of the whale swallowing Jonah, though a whale is large enough to do it, borders greatly on the marvellous; but it would have approached nearer to the idea of miracle, if Jonah had swallowed the whale. In this, which may serve for all cases of miracles, the matter would decide itself, as before stated, namely, is it more probable that a man should have swallowed a whale or told a lie.

But supposing that Jonah had really swallowed the whale, and gone with it in his belly to Ninevah, and to convince the people that it was true, have cast it up in their sight, of the full length and size of a whale, would they not have believed him to have been the devil, instead of a prophet? or, if the whale had carried Jonah to Ninevah, and cast him up in the same public manner, would they not have believed the whale to have been the devil, and Jonah one of his imps.

The most extraordinary of all the things called miracles, related in the New Testament, is that of the devil flying away with Jesus Christ, and carrying him to the top of a high mountain; and to the top of the highest pinnacle of the temple, and showing him and promising to him *all the kingdoms of the world.* How happened it that he did not discover America; or is it only with *kingdoms* that his sooty highness has any interest?

I have too much respect for the moral character of Christ, to believe that he told this whale of a miracle himself: neither is it easy to account for what purpose it could have been fabricated, unless it were to impose upon the connoisseurs of miracles, as is sometimes practised upon the connoisseurs of Queen Anne's farthings, and collectors of relics and antiquities; or to render the belief of miracles, ridiculous, by outdoing miracles, as Don Quixotte outdid chivalry; or to embarrass the belief of miracles, by making it doubtful by what power, whether of God or the Devil, any thing called a miracle was performed. It requires, however, a great deal of faith in the devil to believe this miracle.

In every point of view in which those things called miracles can be placed and considered, the reality of them is improbable, and their existence unnecessary. They would not, as before observed, answer any useful purpose, even if they were true; for it is more difficult to obtain belief to a miracle, than to a principle evidently moral, without any miracle. Moral principle speaks universally for itself. Miracle could be but a thing of the moment, and seen but by a few; after this it requires a transfer of faith from God to man to believe a miracle upon man's report. Instead, therefore, of admitting the recitals of miracles as evidence of any system of religion being true, they ought to be considered as symptoms of its being fabulous. It is necessary to the full and upright character of truth that it rejects the crutch; and it is consistent with the character of fable, to seek the aid that truth rejects. Thus much for mystery and miracle.

As mystery and miracle took charge of the past and the present, prophesy took charge of the future, and rounded the tenses of faith. It was not sufficient to know what had been done, but what would be done. The supposed prophet was the supposed historian of times to come; and if he happened, in shooting with a long bow of a thousand years, to strike within a thousand miles of a mark, the ingenuity of posterity could make it point-blank; and if he happened to be directly wrong, it was only to suppose, as in the case of Jonah and Ninevah, that God had repented himself and changed his mind. What a fool do fabulous systems make of man!

It has been shown, in a former part of this work, that the original meaning of the words *prophet* and *prophesying* has been changed, and that a prophet, in the sense of the word as now used,

is a creature of modern invention; and it is owing to this change in the meaning of the words, that the flights and metaphors of the Jewish poets, and phrases and expressions now rendered obscure, by our not being acquainted with the local circumstances to which they applied at the time they were used, have been erected into prophecies, and made to bend to explanations, at the will and whimsical conceits of sectaries, expounders and commentators. Every thing unintelligible was prophetical, and every thing insignificant was typical. A blunder would have served as a prophecy; and a dish-clout for a type.

If by a prophet we are to suppose a man, to whom the Almighty communicated some event that would take place in future, either there were such men, or there were not. If there were, it is consistent to believe that the event so communicated, would be told in terms that could be understood; and not related in such a loose and obscure manner as to be out of the comprehensions of those that heard it, and so equivocal as to fit almost any circumstance that might happen afterwards. It is conceiving very irreverently of the Almighty, to suppose he would deal in this jesting manner with mankind; yet all the things called prophesies in the book called the Bible, come under this description.

But it is with prophecy as it is with miracle; it could not answer the purpose even if it were real. Those to whom a prophecy should be told, could not tell whether the man prophesied or lied, or whether it had been revealed to him, or whether he conceited it; and if the thing that he prophesied, or intended to prophecy, should happen, or something like it, among the multitude of things that are daily happening, nobody could again know whether he foreknew it, or guessed at it, or whether it was accidental. A prophet, therefore, is a character useless and unnecessary; and the safe side of the case is, to guard against being imposed upon by not giving credit to such relations.

Upon the whole, mystery, miracle, and prophecy, are appendages that belong to fabulous and not to true religion. They are the means by which so many *Lo heres!* and *Lo theres!* have been spread about the world, and religion been made into a trade. The success of one imposter gave encouragement to another, and the quieting salvo of doing *some good* by keeping up a *pious fraud*, protected them from remorse.

Having now extended the subject to a greater length than I first intended, I shall bring it to a close by abstracting a summary from the whole.

First—That the idea or belief of a word of God existing in print, or in writing, or in speech, is inconsistent in itself for reasons already assigned. These reasons, among many others, are the want of an universal language; the mutability of language; the errors to which translations are subject; the possibility of totally suppressing such a word; the probability of altering it, or of fabricating the whole, and imposing it upon the world.

Secondly—That the Creation we behold is the real and ever existing word of God, in which we cannot be deceived. It proclaims his power, it demonstrates his wisdom, it manifests his goodness and beneficence.

Thirdly—That the moral duty of man consists in imitating the moral goodness and beneficence of God manifested in the creation towards all his creatures. That seeing as we daily do the goodness of God to all men, it is an example calling upon all men to practise the same towards each other; and, consequently, that every thing of persecution and revenge between man and man, and every thing of cruelty to animals, is a violation of moral duty.

I trouble not myself about the manner of future existence. I content myself with believing, even to positive conviction, that the power that gave me existence is able to continue it, in any form and manner he pleases, either with or without this body; and it appears more probable to me that I shall continue to exist hereafter, than that I should have had existence, as I now have, before that existence began.

It is certain that, in one point, all nations of the earth and all religions agree; all believe in a God; the things in which they disagree, are the redundancies annexed to that belief; and, therefore, if ever an universal religion should prevail, it will not be believing any thing new, but in getting rid of redundancies, and believing as man believed at first. Adam, if ever there was such a man, was created a Deist; but in the mean time, let every man follow, as he has a right to do, the religion and the worship he prefers.

END OF THE FIRST PART.

THE

AGE OF REASON.

PART SECOND.

PREFACE.

I have mentioned in the former part of *The Age of Reason*, that it had long been my intention to publish my thoughts upon religion; but that I had originally reserved it to a later period in life, intending it to be the last work I should undertake. The circumstances, however, which existed in France in the latter end of the year 1793, determined me to delay it no longer. The just and humane principles of the revolution which philosophy had first diffused, had been departed from. The idea, always dangerous to society as it is derogatory to the Almighty, that priests could forgive sins, though it seemed to exist no longer, had blunted the feelings of humanity, and callously prepared men for the commission of all manner of crimes. The intolerant spirit of church persecutions had transferred itself into politics; the tribunal, styled revolutionary, supplied the place of an inquisition; and the guillotine and the stake outdid the fire and faggot of the church. I saw many of my most intimate friends destroyed; others daily carried to prison; and I had reason to believe, and had also intimations given me, that the same danger was approaching myself.

Under these disadvantages, I began the former part of the Age of Reason; I had, besides, neither Bible nor Testament to refer to, though I was writing against both; nor could I procure any; notwithstanding which, I have produced a work that no Bible believer, though writing at his ease, and with a library of church books about him, can refute. Towards the latter end of December of that year, a motion was made and carried, to exclude foreigners from the convention. There were but two in it, Anacharsis Cloots and myself; and I saw, I was particularly pointed at by Bourdon de l'Oise, in his speech on that motion.

Conceiving, after this, that I had but a few days of liberty, I sat down and brought the work to a close as speedily as possible; and I had not finished it more than six hours, in the state it has since appeared, before a guard came there about three in the morning, with an order signed by the two committees of public safety and surety-general, for putting me in arrestation as a foreigner, and conveyed me to the prison of the Luxembourg. I contrived, in my way there, to call on Joel Barlow, and I put the manuscript of the work into his hands, as more safe than in my possession in prison; and not knowing what might be the fate in France, either of the writer or the work, I addressed it to the protection of the citizens of the United States.

It is with justice that I say, that the guard who executed this order, and the interpreter of the Committee of general surety, who accompanied them to examine my papers, treated me not only with civility, but with respect. The keeper of the Luxembourg, Bennoit, a man of a good heart, showed to me every friendship in his power, as did also all his family, while he continued in that station. He was removed from it, put into arrestation, and carried before the tribunal upon a malignant accusation, but acquitted.

After I had been in the Luxembourg about three weeks, the Americans, then in Paris, went in a body to the convention, to reclaim me as their countryman and friend; but were answered by the President, Vader, who was also President of the Committee of surety-general, and had signed the order for my arrestation, that I was born in England. I heard no more, after this, from any person out of the walls of the prison, till the fall of Robespierre, on the 9th of Thermidor—July 27, 1794.

About two months before this event, I was seized with a fever, that in its progress had every symptom of becoming mortal, and from the effects of which I am not recovered. It was then that I remembered with renewed satisfaction, and congratulated myself most sincerely on having written the former part of "*The Age of Reason.*" I had then but little expectation of surviving, and those about me had less. I know, therefore, by experience, the conscientious trial of my own principles.

I was then with three chamber comrades, Joseph Vanheule, of Bruges, Charles Bastini, and Michael Rubyns, of Louvain. The unceasing and anxious attention of these three friends to me, by

night and by day, I remember with gratitude, and mention with pleasure. It happened that a physician (Dr. Graham) and a surgeon, (Mr. Bond,) part of the suite of General O'Hara, were then in the Luxembourg. I ask not myself, whether it be convenient to them, as men under the English government, that I express to them my thanks; but I should reproach myself if I did not; and also to the physician of the Luxembourg, Dr. Markoski.

I have some reason to believe, because I cannot discover any other cause, that this illness preserved me in existence. Among the papers of Robespierre that were examined and reported upon to the Convention, by a Committee of Deputies, is a note in the hand-writing of Robespierre, in the following words :—

"Demander que Thomas Paine soit decrete d'accusation, pour l'interet de l'Amerique autant que de la France."

To demand that a decree of accusation be passed against Thomas Paine, for the interest of America, as well as of France.

From what cause it was that the intention was not put in execution, I know not, and cannot inform myself; and therefore I ascribe it to impossibility, on account of that illness.

The Convention, to repair as much as lay in their power the injustice I had sustained, invited me publicly and unanimously to return into the Convention, and which I accepted, to show I could bear an injury without permitting it to injure my principles or my disposition. It is not because right principles have been violated, that they are to be abandoned.

I have seen, since I have been at liberty, several publications written, some in America, and some in England, as answers to the former part of "The Age of Reason." If the authors of these can amuse themselves by so doing, I shall not interrupt them. They may write against the work, and against me, as much as they please; they do me more service than they intend, and I can have no objection that they write on. They will find, however, by this second part, without its being written as an answer to them, that they must return to their work, and spin their cobweb over again. The first is brushed away by accident.

They will now find that I have furnished myself with a Bible and a Testament; and I can say also that I have found them to be much worse books than I had conceived. If I

have erred in any thing, in the former part of the Age of Reason, it has been by speaking better of some parts of those books than they have deserved.

I observe that all my opponents resort, more or less, to what they call Scripture Evidence and Bible authority, to help them out. They are so little masters of the subject, as to confound a dispute about authenticity with a dispute about doctrines; I will, however, put them right, that if they should be disposed to write any more, they may know how to begin.

THOMAS PAINE.

October, 1795

THE

AGE OF REASON.

PART THE SECOND.

It has often been said, that any thing may be proved from the Bible, but before any thing can be admitted as proved by the Bible, the Bible itself must be proved to be true; for if the Bible be not true, or the truth of it be doubtful, it ceases to have authority, and cannot be admitted as proof of any thing.

It has been the practice of all Christian commentators on the Bible, and of all Christian priests and preachers, to impose the Bible on the world as a mass of truth, and as the word of God; they have disputed and wrangled, and have anathematized each other about the supposable meaning of particular parts and passages therein; one has said and insisted that such a passage meant such a thing; another that it meant directly the contrary; and a third, that it means neither one nor the other, but something different from both; and this they call *understanding* the Bible.

It has happened, that all the answers which I have seen to the former part of the *Age of Reason* have been written by priests; and these pious men, like their predecessors, contend and wrangle, and pretend to *understand* the Bible; each understands it differently, but each understands it best; and they have agreed in nothing, but in telling their readers that Thomas Paine understands it not.

Now instead of wasting their time, and heating themselves in fractious disputations about doctrinal points drawn from the Bible, these men ought to know, and if they do not, it is civility to inform

them, that the first thing to be understood is, whether there is sufficient authority for believing the Bible to be the word of God, or whether there is not?

There are matters in that book, said to be done by the *express command* of God, that are as shocking to humanity, and to every idea we have of moral justice, as any thing done by Robespierre, by Carrier, by Joseph le Bon, in France, by the English government in the East Indies, or by any other assassin in modern times. When we read in the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, &c. that they (the Israelites) came by stealth upon whole nations of people, who, as the history itself shows, had given them no offence; *that they put all those nations to the sword; that they spared neither age nor infancy; that they utterly destroyed men, women and children; that they left not a soul to breathe;* expressions that are repeated over and over again in those books, and that too with exulting ferocity; are we sure these things are facts? Are we sure that the Creator of man commissioned these things to be done; are we sure that the books that tell us so were written by his authority?

It is not the antiquity of a tale that is any evidence of its truth; on the contrary, it is a symptom of its being fabulous; for the more ancient any history pretends to be, the more it has the resemblance of a fable. The origin of every nation is buried in fabulous tradition, and that of the Jews is as much to be suspected as any other. To charge the commission of acts upon the Almighty, which in their own nature, and by every rule of moral justice, are crimes, as all assassination is, and more especially the assassination of infants, is matter of serious concern. The Bible tells us, that those assassinations were done by the *express command of God.* To believe, therefore, the Bible to be true, we must *unbelieve* all our belief in the moral justice of God; for wherein could crying or smiling infants offend? And to read the Bible without horror, we must undo every thing that is tender, sympathizing, and benevolent in the heart of man. Speaking for myself, if I had no other evidence that the Bible was fabulous, than the sacrifice I must make to believe it to be true, that alone would be sufficient to determine my choice.

But in addition to all the moral evidence against the Bible, I will in the progress of this work, produce such other evidence, as

even a priest cannot deny; and show, from that evidence, that the Bible is not entitled to credit, as being the word of God.

But, before I proceed to this examination, I will show wherein the Bible differs from all other ancient writings with respect to the nature of the evidence necessary to establish its authenticity; and this is the more proper to be done, because the advocates of the Bible, in their answers to the former part of the *Age of Reason*, undertake to say, and they put some stress thereon, that the authenticity of the Bible is as well established as that of any other ancient book; as if our belief of the one could become any rule for our belief of the other.

I know, however, but of one ancient book that authoritatively challenges universal consent and belief, and that is, *Euclid's Elements of Geometry*;* and the reason is, because it is a book of self-evident demonstration, entirely independent of its author, and of every thing relating to time, place and circumstance. The matters contained in that book would have the same authority they now have, had they been written by any other person, or had the work been anonymous, or had the author never been known; for the identical certainty of who was the author, makes no part of our belief of the matters contained in the book. But it is quite otherwith with respect to the books ascribed to Moses, to Joshua, to Samuel, &c. those are books of *testimony*, and they testify of things naturally incredible; and, therefore, the whole of our belief, as to the authenticity of those books, rest, in the first place, upon the *certainty* that they were written by Moses, Joshua, and Samuel; secondly, upon the credit we give to their testimony. We may believe the first, that is, we may believe the certainty of the authorship, and yet not the testimony; in the same manner that we may believe that a certain person gave evidence upon a case and yet not believe the evidence that he gave. But if it should be found, that the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, and Samuel, were not written by Moses, Joshua, and Samuel, and every part of the authority and authenticity of those books is gone at once; for there can be no such thing as forged or invented testimony; neither can there be anonymous testimony, more especially as to things naturally incredible; such as that of talking with God face

* Euclid, according to chronological history, lived three hundred years before Christ, and about one hundred before Archimedes; he was of the city of Alexandria, in Egypt.

to face, or that of the sun and moon standing still at the command of a man. The greatest part of the other ancient books are works of genius; of which kind are those ascribed to Homer, to Plato, to Aristotle, to Demosthenes, to Cicero, &c. Here again the author is not essential in the credit we give to any of those works; for, as works of genius, they would have the same merit they have now, were they anonymous. Nobody believes the Trojan story, as related by Homer, to be true—for it is the poet only that is admired: and the merit of the poet will remain, though the story be fabulous. But if we disbelieve the matters related by the Bible authors (Moses for instance) as we disbelieve the things related by Homer, there remains nothing of Moses in our estimation, but an impostor. As to the ancient historians, from Herodotus to Tacitus, we credit them as far as they relate things probable and credible, and no further: for if we do, we must believe the two miracles which Tacitus relates were performed by Vespasian, that of curing a lame man, and a blind man, in just the same manner as the same things are told of Jesus Christ by his historians. We must also believe the miracles cited by Josephus, that of the sea of Pamphilia opening to let Alexander and his army pass, as is related of the Red Sea in Exodus. These miracles are quite as well authenticated as the Bible miracles, and yet we do not believe them; consequently the degree of evidence necessary to establish our belief of things naturally incredible, whether in the Bible or elsewhere, is far greater than that which obtains our belief to natural and probable things; and, therefore, the advocates for the Bible have no claim to our belief of the Bible, because that we believe things stated in other ancient writings; since we believe the things stated in these writings no further than they are probable and credible, or because they are self-evident, like Euclid; or admire them because they are elegant, like Homer; or approve them because they are sedate, like Plato; or judicious, like Aristotle.

Having premised these things, I proceed to examine the authenticity of the Bible, and I begin with what are called the five books of Moses, *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*. My intention is to show that those books are spurious, and that Moses is not the author of them; and still further, that they were not written in the time of Moses, nor till several hundred years afterwards; that they are no other than an attempted

history of the life of Moses, and of the times in which he is said to have lived, and also of the times prior thereto, written by some very ignorant and stupid pretenders to authorship, several hundred years after the death of Moses, as men now write histories of things that happened, or are supposed to have happened, several hundred or several thousand years ago.

The evidence that I shall produce in this case is from the books themselves; and I will confine my self to this evidence only.—Where I to refer for proof to any of the ancient authors, whom the advocates of the Bible call profane authors, they would controvert that authority, as I controvert theirs; I will therefore meet them on their own ground, and oppose them with their own weapon, the Bible.

In the first place, there is no affirmative evidence that Moses is the author of those books; and that he is the author, is altogether an unfounded opinion, got abroad nobody knows how. The style and manner in which those books are written, give no room to believe, or even to suppose, they were written by Moses; for it is altogether the style and manner of another person speaking of Moses. In Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, (for every thing in Genesis is prior to the times of Moses and not the least allusion is made to him therein,) the whole, I say, of these books is in the third person; it is always, *the Lord said unto Moses*, or *Moses said unto the Lord:* or *Moses said unto the people*, or *the people said unto Moses;* and this is the style and manner that historians use, in speaking of the person whose lives and actions they are writing. It may be said that a man may speak of himself in the third person; and, therefore, it may be supposed that Moses did; but supposition proves nothing; and if the advocates for the belief that Moses wrote those books himself, have nothing better to advance than supposition, they may as well be silent.

But granting the grammatical right, that Moses might speak of himself in the third person, because any man might speak of himself in that manner, it cannot be admitted as a fact in those books, that it is Moses who speaks, without rendering Moses truly ridiculous and absurd:—for example, Numbers, chap, xii. ver. 3. "*Now the man Moses was very meek, above all men which were on the face of the earth.*" If Moses said this of himself, instead of being the meekest of men, he was one of the most vain and arrogant of coxcombs; and the advocates for those books may now

take which side they please, for both sides are against them; if Moses was not the author, the books are without authority; and if he was the author, the author was without credit, because to boast of *meekness*, is the reverse of meekness, and is *a lie in sentiment.*

In Deuteronomy, the style and manner of writing marks more evidently than in the former books, that Moses is not the writer. The manner here used is dramatical: the writer opens the subject by a short introductory discourse, and then introduces Moses in the act of speaking, and when he has made Moses finish his harrangue, he (the writer) resumes his own part, and speaks till he brings Moses forward again, and at last closes the scene with an account of the death, funeral, and character of Moses.

This interchange of speakers occurs four times in this book: from the first verse of the first chapter, to the end of the fifth verse, it is the writer who speaks; he then introduces Moses as in the act of making his harrangue, and this continues to the end of the 40th verse of the fourth chapter; here the writer drops Moses, and speaks historically of what was done in consequence of what Moses, when living, is supposed to have said, and which the writer has dramatically rehearsed.

The writer opens the subject again in the first verse of the fifth chapter, though it is only by saying, that Moses called the people of Israel together; he then introduces Moses as before, and continues him, as in the act of speaking, to the end of the 26th chapter. He does the same thing at the beginning of the 27th chapter; and continues Moses, as in the act of speaking, to the end of the 28th chapter. At the 29th chapter the writer speaks again through the whole of the first verse, and the first line of the second verse, where he introduces Moses for the last time, and continues him, as in the act of speaking, to the end of the 33d chapter.

The writer having now finished the rehearsal on the part of Moses, comes forward, and speaks through the whole of the last chapter; he begins by telling the reader, that Moses went up to the top of Pisgah; that he saw from thence the land which (the writer says) had been promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; that he, Moses, died there, in the land of Moab, but that no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day, that is, unto the time in which the writer lived, who wrote the book of Deuteronomy. The writer then tells us, that Moses was 110 years of age when he

died—that his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated; and he concludes by saying, that there arose not a prophet *since* in Israel like unto Moses, whom, says this anonymous writer, the Lord knew face to face.

Having thus shown, as far as grammatical evidence applies, that Moses was not the writer of those books, I will, after making a few observations on the inconsistencies of the writer of the book of Deuteronomy, proceed to show, from the historical and chronological evidence contained in those books, that Moses, *was not*, because *he could not be*, the writer of them; and consequently, that there is no authority for believing, that the inhuman and horrid butcheries of men, women, and children, told in those books, were done, as those books say they were, at the command of God. It is a duty incumbent on every true Deist, that he vindicate the moral justice of God against the calumnies of the Bible.

The writer of the book of Deuteronomy, whoever he was, (for it is an anonymous work,) is obsure, and also in contradiction with himself, in the account he has given of Moses.

After telling that Moses went to the top of Pisgah (and it does not appear from any account that he ever came down again) he tells us, that Moses died *there* in the land of Moab, and that *he* buried him in a valley in the land of Moab; but as there is no antecedent to the pronoun *he*, there is no knowing who *he* was that did bury him. If the writer meant that *he* (God) buried him, how should *he* (the writer) know it? or why should we (the readers) believe him? since we know not who the writer was that tells us so, for certainly Moses could not himself tell where he was buried.

The writer also tells us, that no man knoweth where the sepulchre of Moses is *unto this day*, meaning the time in which this writer lived; how then should he know that Moses was buried in a valley in the land of Moab? for as the writer lived long after the time of Moses, as is evident from his using the expression of *unto this day*, meaning a great length of time after the death of Moses, he certainly was not at his funeral; and on the other hand, it is impossible that Moses himself could say, that *no man knoweth where the sepulchre is unto this day*. To make Moses the speaker, would be an improvement on the play of a child that hides himself and cries *nobody can find me;* nobody can find Moses.

This writer has no where told us how he came by the speeches which he has put into the mouth of Moses to speak, and, therefore, we have a right to conclude, that he either composed them himself, or wrote them from oral tradition. One or the other of these is the more probable, since he has given, in the fifth chapter, a table of commandments, in which that called the fourth commandment is different from the fourth commandment in the twentieth chapter of Exodus. In that of Exodus, the reason given for keeping the seventh day is, "because (says the commandment) God made the heavens and the earth in six days, and rested on the seventh;" but in that of Deuteronomy, the reason given is, that it was the day on which the children of Israel came out of Egypt, and *therefore*, says this commandment, *the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath-day. This* makes no mention of the creation, nor *that* of the coming out of Egypt. There are also many things given as laws of Moses in this book, that are not to be found in any of the other books; among which is that inhuman and brutal law, chap. xxi. ver. 18, 19, 20, 21, which authorizes parents, the father and the mother, to bring their own children to have them stoned to death for what it is pleased to call stubbornness. But priests have always been fond of preaching up Deuteronomy, for Deuteronomy preaches up tythes; and it is from this book, chap. xxv. ver. 4, they have taken the phrase, and applied it to tything, that *thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn;* and that this might not escape observation, they have noted it in the table of contents at the head of the chapter, though it is only a single verse of less than two lines. O! priests! priests! ye are willing to be compared to an ox, for the sake of tythes. Though it is impossible for us to know *identically* who the writer of Deuteronomy was, it is not difficult to discover him *professionally*, that he was some Jewish priest, who lived, as I shall show in the course of this work, at least three hundred and fifty years, after the time of Moses.

I come now to speak of the historical and chronological evidence. The chronology that I shall use is the Bible chronology; for I mean not to go out of the Bible for evidence of any thing, but to make the Bible itself prove historically and chronologically, that Moses is not the author of the books ascribed to him. It is, therefore, proper that I inform the reader, (such an one at least as may not have the opportunity of knowing it,) that in the

larger Bibles, and also in some smaller ones, there is a series of chronology printed in the margin of every page, for the purpose of showing how long the historical matters stated in each page happened, or are supposed to have happened, before Christ, and, consequently, the distance of time between one historical circumstance and another.

I begin with the book of Genesis. In the 14th chapter of Genesis, the writer gives an account of Lot being taken prisoner in a battle between the four kings against five, and carried off; and that when the account of Lot being taken, came to Abraham, he armed all his household, and marched to rescue Lot from the captors; and that he pursued them unto Dan. (ver. 14.)

To show in what manner this expression of *pursuing them unto Dan* applies to the case in question, I will refer to two circumstances, the one in America, the other in France. The city now called New-York, in America, was originally New Amsterdam; and the town in France, lately called Havre Marat, was before called Havre de Grace. New Amsterdam was changed to New-York in the year 1664; Havre de Grace to Havre Marat in 1793. Should, therefore, any writing be found, though without date, in which the name of New-York should be mentioned, it would be certain evidence that such a writing could not have been written before, and must have been written after New Amsterdam was changed to New-York, and consequently not till after the year 1664, or at least during the course of that year. And, in like manner, any dateless writing, with the name of Havre Marat, would be certain evidence that such a writing must have been written after Havre de Grace became Havre Marat, and consequently not till after the year 1793, or at least during the course of that year.

I now come to the application of those cases, and to show that there was no such place as *Dan*, till many years after the death of Moses; and consequently, that Moses could not be the writer of the book of Genesis, where this account of pursuing them unto *Dan* is given.

The place that is called Dan in the Bible was originally a town of the Gentiles, called Laish; and when the tribe of Dan seized upon this town, they changed its name to Dan, in commemoration of Dan, who was the father of that tribe, and the great grandson of Abraham.

To establish this in proof, it is necessary to refer from Genesis to the 18th chapter of the book called the book of Judges. It is there said (ver. 27) *that they* (the Danites) *come unto Laish to a people that were quiet and secure, and they smote them with the edge of the sword* (the Bible is filled with murder) *and burned the city with fire; and they built a city*, (ver. 28,) and dwelt therein, *and they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan, their father, howbeit the name of the city was Laish at the first.*

This account of the Danites taking possession of Laish and changing it to Dan, is placed in the book of Judges immediately after the death of Sampson. The death of Sampson is said to have happened 1120 years before Christ, and that of Moses 1451 before Christ; and, therefore, according to the historical arrangement, the place was not called Dan till 331 years after the death of Moses.

There is a striking confusion between the historical and the chronological arrangement in the Book of Judges. The five last chapters, as they stand in the book, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, are put chronologically before all the preceding chapters; they are made to be 28 years before the 16th chapter, 266 before the 15th, 245 before the 13th, 195 before the 9th, 90 before the 4th, and 15 years before the first chapter. This shows the uncertain and fabulous state of the Bible. According to the chronological arrangement, the taking of Laish, and giving it the name of Dan, is made to be 20 years after the death of Joshua, who was the successor of Moses; and by the historical order as it stands in the book, it is made to be 306 years after the death of Joshua, and 331 after that of Moses; but they both exclude Moses from being the writer of Genesis, because, according to either of the statements, no such place as Dan existed in the time of Moses; and, therefore, the writer of Genesis must have been some person who lived after the town of Laish had the name of Dan; and who that person was, nobody knows; and consequently the book of Genesis is anonymous and without authority.

I proceed now to state another point of historical and chronological evidence, and to show therefrom, as in the preceding case, that Moses is not the author of the book of Genesis.

In the 36th chapter of Genesis there is given a genealogy of the sons and descendents of Esau, who are called Edomites, and also a list, by name, of the kings of Edom; in enumerating of which,

it is said, verse 31, "*And these are the kings that reigned in Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel.*"

Now, were any dateless writings to be found, in which, speaking of any past events, the writer should say, these things happened before there was any Congress in America, or before there was any Convention in France, it would be evidence that such writings could not have been written before, and could only be written after there was a Congress in America, or a Convention in France, as the case might be; and, consequently, that it could not be written by any person who died before there was a Congress in the one country, or a Convention in the other.

Nothing is more frequent, as well in history as in conversation, than to refer to a fact in the room of a date: it is most natural so to do, because a fact fixes itself in the memory better than a date; secondly, because the fact includes the date, and serves to excite two ideas at once; and this manner of speaking by circumstances implies as positively that the fact alluded to is *past*, as if it was so expressed. When a person speaking upon any matter, says, it was before I was married, or before my son was born, or before I went to America, or before I went to France, it is absolutely understood, and intended to be understood, that he has been married, that he has had a son, that he has been in America, or been in France. Language does not admit of using this mode of expression in any other sense; and whenever such an expression is found any where, it can only be understood in the sense in which only it could have been used.

The passage, therefore, that I have quoted—"that these are the kings that reigned in Edom, before there reigned *any* king over the children of Israel," could only have been written after the first king began to reign over them; and, consequently, that the book of Genesis so far from having been written by Moses, could not have been written till the time of Saul at least. This is the positive sense of the passage; but the expression, *any* king, implies more kings than one, at least it implies two, and this will carry it to the time of David; and, if taken in a general sense, it carries itself through all the time of the Jewish monarchy.

Had we met with this verse in any part of the Bible that *professed* to have been written after kings began to reign in Israel, it would have been impossible not to have seen the application of it. It happens then that this is the case; the two books of Chro-

nicles, which gave a history of all the kings of Israel, are *professedly*, as well as in fact, written after the Jewish monarchy began; and this verse that I have quoted, and all the remaining verses of the 36th chapter of Genesis, are, word for word, in the first chapter of Chronicles, beginning at the 43d verse.

It was with consistency that the writer of the Chronicles could say, as he has said, 1st Chron. chap. i. ver. 43, *These are the kings that reigned in Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel*, because he was going to give, and has given a list of the kings that had reigned in Israel; but as it is impossible that the same expression could have been used before that period, it is as certain as any thing can be proved from historical language, that this part of Genesis is taken from Chronicles, and that Genesis is not so old as Chronicles, and probably not so old as the book of Homer, or as Æsop's Fables, admitting Homer to have been, as the tables of chronology state, contemporary with David or Solomon, and Æsop to have lived about the end of the Jewish monarchy.

Take away from Genesis the belief that Moses was the author, on which only the strange belief that it is the word of God has stood, and there remains nothing of Genesis but an anonymous book of stories, fables, and traditionary or invented absurdities, or of downright lies. The story of Eve and the serpent, and of Noah and his ark, drops to a level with the Arabian Tales, without the merit of being entertaining; and the account of men living to eight and nine hundred years becomes as fabulous as the immortality of the giants of the Mythology.

Besides, the character of Moses, as stated in the Bible, is the most horrid that can be imagined. If those accounts be true, he was the wretch that first began and carried on wars on the score, or on the pretence of religion; and under that mask, or that infatuation, committed the most unexampled atrocities that are to be found in the history of any nation, of which I will state only one instance.

When the Jewish army returned from one of their murdering and plundering excursions, the account goes on as follows, Numbers, chap. xxxi. ver. 13.

"And Moses, and Eleazer the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them without the camp; and Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, with the captains

over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle; and Moses said unto them, *Have ye saved all the women alive?* behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the council of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord. Now therefore, *kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known a man by lying with him; but all the woman children that have not known a man by lying with him keep alive for yourselves.*

Among the detestable villains that in any period of the world have disgraced the name of man, it is impossible to find a greater than Moses, if this account be true. Here is an order to butcher the boys, to massacre the mothers, and debauch the daughters.

Let any mother put herself in the situation of those mothers; one child murdered, another destined to violation, and herself in the hands of an executioner: let any daughter put herself in the situation of those daughters, destined as a prey to the murderers of a mother and a brother, and what will be their feelings? It is in vain that we attempt to impose upon nature, for nature will have her course, and the religion that tortures all her social ties is a false religion.

After this detestable order, follows an account of the plunder taken, and the manner of dividing it; and here it is that the prophaneness of priestly hypocrisy increases the catalogue of crimes. Verse 37, "*And the Lord's tribute* of the sheep was six hundred and three score and fifteen; and the beeves was thirty and six thousand, of which the *Lord's tribute* was three score and twelve; and the asses were thirty thousand, of which the Lord's tribute was three-score and one; and the persons were thirty thousand, of which the Lord's tribute was thirty and two." In short, the matters contained in this chapter, as well as in many other parts of the Bible, are too horrid for humanity to read, or for decency to hear; for it appears, from the 35th verse of this chapter, that the number of women-children consigned to debauchery by the order of Moses was thirty-two thousand.

People in general know not what wickedness there is in this pretended word of God. Brought up in habits of superstition, they take it for granted that the Bible is true, and that it is good; they permit themselves not to doubt of it, and they carry the ideas they form of the benevolence of the Almighty to the book which

they have been taught to believe was written by his authority. Good heavens! it is quite another thing; it is a book of lies, wickedness, and blasphemy; for what can be greater blasphemy, than to ascribe the wickedness of man to the orders of the Almighty?

But to return to my subject, that of showing that Moses is not the author of the books ascribed to him, and that the Bible is spurious. The two instances I have already given would be sufficient, without any additional evidence, to invalidate the authenticity of any book that pretended to be four or five hundred years more ancient than the matters it speaks of, or refers to, as facts; for in the case of *pursuing them unto Dan*, and of *the kings that reigned over the children of Israel*, not even the flimsy pretence of prophesy can be pleaded. The expressions are in the preter tense, and it would be downright idiotism to say that a man could prophesy in the preter tense.

But there are many other passages scattered throughout those books that unite in the same point of evidence. It is said in Exodus, (another of the books ascribed to Moses,) chap. xvi. verse 34, "And the children of Israel did eat manna *until they came to a land inhabited;* they did eat manna *until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan.*

Whether the children of Israel ate manna or not, or what manna was, or whether it was any thing more than a kind of fungus or small mushroom, or other vegetable substance common to that part of the country, makes nothing to my argument; all that I mean to show is, that it is not Moses that could write this account, because the account extends itself beyond the life and time of Moses. Moses, according to the Bible, (but it is such a book of lies and contradictions there is no knowing which part to believe, or whether any,) dies in the wilderness, and never came upon the borders of the land of Canaan; and, consequently, it could not be he that said what the children of Israel did, or what they ate when they came there. This account of eating manna, which they tell us was written by Moses, extends itself to the time of Joshua, the successor of Moses, as appears by the account given in the book of Joshua, after the children of Israel had passed the river Jordan, and came unto the borders of the land of Canaan. Joshua, chap. v. ver. 12. "*And the manna ceased on the morrow, after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the*

children of Israel manna any more, but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year."

But a more remarkable instance than this occurs in Deuteronomy; which, while it shows that Moses could not be the writer of that book, shows also the fabulous notions that prevailed at that time about giants. In the third chapter of Deuteronomy, among the conquests said to be made by Moses, is an account of the taking of Og, king of Bashan, ver. 11. "For only Og, king of Bashan, remained of the race of giants; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron; is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon? nine cubits was the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man." A cubit is 1 foot 9 888-1000ths inches; the length, therefore, of the bed was 16 feet 4 inches, and the breadth 7 feet 4 inches; thus much for this giant's bed. Now for the historical part, which, though the evidence is not so direct and positive, as in the former cases, it is nevertheless very presumable and corroborating evidence, and is better than the *best* evidence on the contrary side.

The writer, by way of proving the existence of this giant, refers to his bed, as an *ancient relic*, and says, is it not in Rabbath (or Rabbah) of the children of Ammon? meaning that it is; for such is frequently the Bible method of affirming a thing. But it could not be Moses that said this, because Moses could know nothing about Rabbah, nor of what was in it. Rabbah was not a city belonging to this giant king, nor was it one of the cities that Moses took. The knowledge, therefore, that this bed was at Rabbah, and of the particulars of its dimensions, must be referred to the time when Rabbah was taken, and this was not till four hundred years after the death of Moses; for which, see 2 Sam. chap. xii. ver. 26. "And Joab (David's general) fought against *Rabbah of the children of Ammon*, and took the royal city."

As I am not undertaking to point out all the contradictions in time, place and circumstance, that abound in the books ascribed to Moses, and which prove to a demonstration that those books could not be written by Moses, nor in the time of Moses: I proceed to the book of Joshua, and to show that Joshua is not the author of that book, and that it is anonymous and without authority. The evidence I shall produce is contained in the book itself; I will not go out of the Bible for proof against the supposed authenticity of the Bible. False testimony is always good against itself.

Joshua, according to the first chapter of Joshua, was the immediate successor of Moses ; he was, moreover, a military man, which Moses was not, and he continued as chief of the people of Israel 25 years ; that is, from the time that Moses died, which, according to the Bible chronology, was 1451 years before Christ, until 1426 years before Christ, when, according to the same chronology, Joshua died. If, therefore, we find in this book, said to have been written by Joshua, reference to *facts done* after the death of Joshua, it is evidence that Joshua could not be the author ; and also that the book could not have been written till after the time of the latest fact which it records. As to the character of the book, it is horrid ; it is a military history of rapine and murder, as savage and brutal as those recorded of his predecessor in villany and hypocrisy, Moses ; and the blasphemy consists, as in the former books, in ascribing those deeds to the order of the Almighty.

In the first place, the book of Joshua, as is the case in the preceding books, is written in the third person ; it is the historian of Joshua that speaks, for it would have been absurd and vain-glorious that Joshua should say of himself, as is said of him in the last verse of the sixth chapter, that "*his fame was noised throughout all the country.*" I now come more immediately to the proof.

In the 24th chapter, ver. 31, it is said, "that Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and *all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua.*" Now, in the name of common sense, can it be Joshua that relates what people had done after he was dead ? This account must not only have been written by some historian that lived after Joshua, but that lived also after the elders that out-lived Joshua.

There are several passages of a general meaning with respect to time, scattered throughout the book of Joshua, that carries the time in which the book was written to a distance from the time of Joshua, but without marking by exclusion any particular time, as in the passage above quoted. In that passage, the time that intervened between the death of Joshua and the death of the elders is excluded descriptively and absolutely, and the evidence substantiates that the book could not have been written till after the death of the last.

But though the passages to which I allude, and which I am going to quote, do not designate any particular time by exclusion, they imply a time far more distant from the days of Joshua, than is

contained between the death of Joshua and the death of the elders. —Such is the passage, chap. x. ver. 14 ; where, after giving an account that the sun stood still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, at the command of Joshua, (a tale only fit to amuse children) the passage says, "And there was no day like that, before it, nor after it, that the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man."

This tale of the sun standing still upon Mount Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, is one of those fables that detects itself. Such a circumstance could not have happened without being known all over the world. One half would have wondered why the sun did not rise, and the other why it did not set ; and the tradition of it would be universal, whereas there is not a nation in the world that knows any thing about it. But why must the moon stand still? What occasion could there be for moon-light in the day-time, and that too while the sun shined? As a poetical figure, the whole is well enough ; it is akin to that in the song of Deborah and Baruk, *The stars in their courses fought against Sisera ;* but it is inferior to the figurative declaration of Mahomet, to the persons who came to expostulate with him on his going on, *Wert thou*, said he, *to come to me with the sun in thy right hand and the moon in thy left, it should not alter my career.* For Joshua to have exceeded Mahomet, he should have put the sun and moon one in each pocket, and carried them as Guy Faux carried his dark lanthorn, and taken them out to shine as he might happen to want them.

The sublime and the ridiculous are often so nearly related that it is difficult to class them separately. One step above the sublime makes the ridiculous, and one step above the ridiculous makes the sublime again ; the account, however, abstracted from the poetical fancy, shows the ignorance of Joshua, for he should have commanded the earth to have stood still.

The time implied by the expression *after* it, that is, after that day, being put in comparison with all the time that passed *before* it, must, in order to give any expressive signification to the passage, mean a *great length of time :*—for example, it would have been ridiculous to have said so the next day, or the next week, or the next month, or the next year ; to give, therefore, meaning to the passage, comparative with the wonder it relates, and the prior time it alludes to, it must mean centuries of years ; less, however, than

one would be trifling, and less than two would be barely admissible.

A distant, but general time, is also expressed in the 8th chapter; where, after giving an account of the taking the city of Ai, it is said, ver. 28th, "And Joshua burned Ai, and made it an heap for ever, a desolation *unto this day*;" and again, ver. 29, where, speaking of the king of Ai, whom Joshua had hanged, and buried at the entering of the gate, it is said, "And he raised thereon a great heap of stones, which remaineth unto this day," that is, unto the day or time in which the writer of the book of Joshua lived. And again, in the 10th chapter, where, after speaking of the five kings whom Joshua had hanged on five trees, and then thrown in a cave, it is said, "And he laid great stones on the cave's mouth, which remain unto this very day."

In enumerating the several exploits of Joshua, and of the tribes, and of the places which they conquered or attempted, it is said, c. xv. ver. 63, "As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah *at Jerusalem unto this day*." The question upon this passage is, at what time did the Jebusites and the children of Judah dwell together at Jerusalem? As this matter occurs again in the first chapter of Judges, I shall reserve my observations till I come to that part.

Having thus shown from the book of Joshua itself, without any auxiliary evidence whatever, that Joshua is not the author of that book, and that it is anonymous, and consequently without authority. I proceed, as before-mentioned, to the book of Judges.

The book of Judges is anonymous on the face of it; and, therefore, even the pretence is wanting to call it the word of God; it has not so much as a nominal voucher; it is altogether fatherless.

This book begins with the same expression as the book of Joshua. That of Joshua begins, chap. i. ver 1, *Now after the death of Moses, &c.* and this of Judges begins, *Now after the death of Joshua, &c.* This, and the similarity of style between the two books, indicate that they are the work of the same author, but who he was, is altogether unknown: the only point that the book proves is, that the author lived long after the time of Joshua; for though it begins as if it followed immediately after his death, the

second chapter is an epitome or abstract of the whole book, which, according to the Bible chronology, extends its history through a space of 306 years ; that is, from the death of Joshua, 1426 years before Christ, to the death of Sampson, 1120 years before Christ, and only 25 years before Saul went *to seek his father's asses, and was made king.* But there is good reason to believe, that it was not written till the time of David, at least, and that the book of Joshua was not written before the same time.

In the first chapter of Judges, the writer, after announcing the death of Joshua, proceeds to tell what happened between the children of Judah and the native inhabitants of the land of Canaan. In this statement, the writer, having abruptly mentioned Jerusalem in the 7th verse, says immediately after, in the 8th verse, by way of explanation, "Now the children of Judah *had* fought against Jerusalem, and *taken* it;" consequently this book could not have been written before Jerusalem had been taken. The reader will recollect the quotation I have just before made from the 15th chapter of Joshua, ver. 63, where it is said, that *the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem at this day ;* meaning the time when the book of Joshua was written.

The evidence I have already produced, to prove that the books I have hitherto treated of were not written by the persons to whom they are ascribed, nor till many years after their death, if such persons ever lived, is already so abundant, that I can afford to admit this passage with less weight than I am entitled to draw from it. For the case is, that so far as the Bible can be credited as an history, the city of Jerusalem was not taken till the time of David; and, consequently, that the books of Joshua, and of Judges, were not written till after the commencement of the reign of David, which was 370 years after the death of Joshua.

The name of the city, that was afterwards called Jerusalem, was originally Jebus or Jebusi, and was the capital of the Jebusites. The account of David's taking this city is given in 2 Samuel, chap. v. ver. 4, &c.; also in 1 chron. chap. xiv. ver. 4, &c. There is no mention in any part of the Bible that it was ever taken before, nor any account that favours such an opinion. It is not said, either in Samuel or in Chronicles, that they *utterly destroyed men, women, and children ; that they left not a soul to breathe,* as is said of their other conquests ; and the silence here

observed implies that it was taken by capitulation, and that the Jebusites, the native inhabitants, continued to live in the place after it was taken. The account, therefore, given in Joshua, that *the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah* at Jerusalem at this day, corresponds to no other time than after the taking the city by David.

Having now shown that every book in the Bible, from Genesis to Judges, is without authenticity, I come to the book of Ruth, an idle, bungling story, foolishly told, nobody knows by whom, about a strolling country girl creeping slyly to bed to her cousin Boaz. Pretty stuff indeed to be called the word of God! It is, however, one of the best books in the Bible, for it is free from murder and rapine.

I come next to the two books of Samuel, and to show that those books were not written by Samuel, nor till a great length of time after the death of Samuel: and that they are, like all the former books, anonymous and without authority.

To be convinced that these books have been written much later than the time of Samuel, and, consequently, not by him, it is only necessary to read the account which the writer gives of Saul going to seek his father's asses, and of his interview with Samuel, of whom Saul went to inquire about those lost asses, as foolish people now-a-days go to a conjuror to inquire after lost things.

The writer, in relating this story of Saul, Samuel, and the asses, does not tell it as a thing that had just then happened, but as an ancient *story in the time this writer lived;* for he tells it in the language or terms used at the time that *Samuel* lived, which obliges the writer to explain the story in the terms or language used in the time the *writer* lived.

Samuel, in the account given of him, in the first of those books, chap. ix. is called *the seer;* and it is by this term that Saul inquires after him, ver. 11, "And as they (Saul and his servant) went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water; and they said unto them, *Is the seer here?*" Saul then went according to the direction of these maidens, and met Samuel without knowing him, and said unto him, ver. 18, "Tell me, I pray thee, where the *seer's house is?* and Samuel answered Saul, and said, *I am the seer.*"

As the writer of the book of Samuel relates these questions and answers, in the language or manner of speaking used in the time

they are said to have been spoken; and as that manner of speaking was out of use when this author wrote, he found it necessary, in order to make the story understood, to explain the terms in which these questions and answers are spoken; and he does this in the 9th verse, where he says, "*before-time*, in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he spake, Come, let us go to the seer; for he that is now called a prophet, was *before-time* called a seer." This proves, as I have before said, that this story of Saul, Samuel, and the asses, was an ancient story at the time the book of Samuel was written, and consequently that Samuel did not write it, and that that book is without authenticity.

But if we go further into those books, the evidence is still more positive that Samuel is not the writer of them; for they relate things that did not happen till several years after the death of Samuel. Samuel died before Saul; for the 1st Samuel, chap. xxviii. tells, that Saul and the witch of Endor conjured Samuel up after he was dead; yet the history of the matters contained in those books is extended through the remaining part of Saul's life, and to the latter end of the life of David, who succeeded Saul. The account of the death and burial of Samuel (a thing which he could not write himself) is related in the 25th chapter of the first book of Samuel; and the chronology affixed to this chapter makes this to be 1060 years before Christ; yet the history of this *first* book is brought down to 1056 years before Christ; that is, to the death of Saul, which was not till four years after the death of Samuel.

The second book of Samuel begins with an account of things that did not happen till four years after Samuel was dead; for it begins with the reign of David, who succeeded Saul, and it goes on to the end of David's reign, which was forty-three years after the death of Samuel; and, therefore, the books are in themselves positive evidence that they were not written by Samuel.

I have now gone through all the books in the first part of the Bible, to which the names of persons are affixed, as being the authors of those books, and which the church, styling itself the Christian church, have imposed upon the world as the writings of Moses, Joshua, and Samuel; and I have detected and proved the falsehood of this imposition. And now, ye priests, of every description, who have preached and written against the former part of the *Age of Reason*, what have ye to say? Will ye, with all

this mass of evidence against you, and staring you in the face, still have the assurance to march into your pulpits, and continue to impose these books on your congregations, as the works of *inspired penmen*, and the word of God, when it is as evident as demonstration can make truth appear, that the persons who, ye say, are the authors, are *not* the authors, and that ye know not who the authors are. What shadow of pretence have ye now to produce, for continuing the blasphemous fraud? What have ye still to offer against the pure and moral religion of Deism, in support of your system of falsehood, idolatry, and pretended revelation? Had the cruel and murderous orders, with which the Bible is filled, and the numberless torturing executions of men, women, and children, in consequence of those orders, been ascribed to some friend, whose memory you revered, you would have glowed with satisfaction at detecting the falsehood of the charge, and gloried in defending his injured fame. It is because ye are sunk in the cruelty of superstition, or feel no interest in the honour of your Creator, that ye listen to the horrid tales of the Bible, or hear them with callous indifference. The evidence I have produced, and shall still produce in the course of this work, to prove that the Bible is without authority, will, whilst it wounds the stubbornness of a priest, relieve and tranquillize the minds of millions; it will free them from all those hard thoughts of the Almighty which priest-craft and the Bible had infused into their minds, and which stood in everlasting opposition to all their ideas of his moral justice and benevolence.

I come now to the two books of Kings, and the two books of Chronicles. Those books are altogether historical, and are chiefly confined to the lives and actions of the Jewish kings, who in general were a parcel of rascals; but these are matters with which we have no more concern, than we have with the Roman emperors, or Homer's account of the Trojan war. Besides which, as those works are anonymous, and as we know nothing of the writer, or of his character, it is impossible for us to know what degree of credit to give to the matters related therein. Like all other ancient histories, they appear to be a jumble of fable and of fact, and of probable and of improbable things; but which, distance of time and place, and change of circumstances in the world, have rendered obsolete and uninteresting.

The chief use I shall make of those books, will be that of comparing them with each other, and with other parts of the Bible, to show the confusion, contradiction, and cruelty, in this pretended word of God.

The first book of Kings begins with the reign of Solomon, which according to the Bible Chronology, was 1015 years before Christ; and the second book ends 588 years before Christ, being a little after the reign of Zedekiah, whom Nebuchadnezzar, after taking Jerusalem, and conquering the Jews, carried captive to Babylon. The two books include a space of 427 years.

The two book of Chronicles are a history of the same times, and in general of the same persons, by another author; for it would be absurd to suppose that the same author wrote the history twice over. The first book of Chronicles (after giving the genealogy from Adam to Saul, which takes up the first nine chapters) begins with the reign of David; and the last book ends as in the last book of Kings, soon after the reign of Zedekiah, about 588 years before Christ. The two last verses of the last chapter bring the history 52 years more forward, that is, to 536. But these verses do not belong to the book, as I shall show when I come to speak of the book of Ezra.

The two books of Kings, besides the history of Saul, David and Solomon, who reigned over *all* Israel, contain an abstract of the lives of seventeen kings and one queen, who are styled kings of Judah, and of nineteen, who are styled kings of Israel; for the Jewish nation, immediately on the death of Solomon, split into two parties, who chose separate kings, and who carried on most rancorous wars against each other.

Those two books are little more than a history of assassinations, treachery, and wars. The cruelties that the Jews had accustomed themselves to practise on the Canaanites, whose country they had savagely invaded under a pretended gift from God, they afterwards practised as furiously on each other. Scarcely half their kings died a natural death, and in some instances whole families were destroyed to secure possession to the successor, who, after a few years, and sometimes only a few months, or less, shared the same fate. In the tenth chapter of the second book of Kings, an account is given of two baskets full of children's heads, 70 in number, being exposed at the entrance of the city; they were the children of Ahab, and were murdered by

the orders of Jehu, whom Elisha, the pretended man of God, had anointed to be king over Israel, on purpose to commit this bloody deed, and assassinate his predecessor. And in the account of the reign of Manaham, one of the kings of Israel who had murdered Shallum, who had reigned but one month, it is said, Kings, chap. xv. ver. 16, that Manaham smote the city of Tiphsah, because they opened not the city to him, *and all the women that were therein that were with child they ripped up.*

Could we permit ourselves to suppose that the Almighty would distinguish any nation of people by the name of *his chosen people*, we must suppose that people to have been an example to all the rest of the world of the purest piety and humanity, and not such a nation of ruffians and cut-throats as the ancient Jews were; a people, who, corrupted by, and copying after such monsters and imposters as Moses and Aaron, Joshua, Samuel, and David, had distinguished themselves above all others, on the face of the known earth, for barbarity and wickedness. If we will not stubbornly shut our eyes, and steel our hearts, it is impossible not to see, in spite of all that long-established superstition imposes upon the mind, that that flattering appellation of *his chosen people* is no other than a *lie* the priests and leaders of the Jews had invented, to cover the baseness of their own characters; and which Christian priests, sometimes as corrupt, and often as cruel, have professed to believe.

The two books of Chronicles are a repetition of the same crimes; but the history is broken in several places, by the author leaving out the reign of some of their kings; and in this, as well as in that of Kings, there is such a frequent transition from kings of Judah to kings of Israel, and from kings of Israel to kings of Judah, that the narrative is obscure in the reading. In the same book the history sometimes contradicts itself; for example, in the second book of Kings, chap. i. ver. 8, we are told, but in rather ambiguous terms, that after the death of Ahaziah, king of Israel, Jehoram, or Joram (who was of the house of Ahab) reigned in his stead in the *second year of* Jehoram, or Joram, son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah; and in chap. viii. ver. 16, of the same book, it is said, and in the *fifth year* of Joram, the son of Ahab, king of Israel, Jehoshaphat being then king of Judah, began to reign; that is, one chapter says Joram of Judah began to reign in the *second year* of Joram of Israel; and the other chap-

ter says, that Joram of Israel began to reign in the *fifth year* of Joram of Judah.

Several of the most extraordinary matters related in one history, as having happened during the reign of such and such of their kings, are not to be found in the other, in relating the reign of the same king; for example, the two first rival kings, after the death of Solomon, were Rehoboam and Jeroboam; and in 1 Kings, chap. xii. and xiii. an account is given of Jeroboam making an offering of burnt incense, and that a man who is there called a man of God, cried out against the altar, chap. xiii. ver. 2, "O altar! altar! thus saith the Lord; Behold, a child shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name, and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places, and burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee."—Ver. 3, "And it came to pass, when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Bethel, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, *Lay hold on him*; and his hand which he put out against him *dried up, so that he could not pull it again to him.*"

One would think that such an extraordinary case as this, (which is spoken of as a judgment,) happening to the chief of one of the parties, and that at the first moment of the separation of the Israelites into two nations, would if it had been true, have been recorded in both histories. But though men in latter time have believed *all that the prophets have said unto them*, it does not appear these prophets or historians believed each other, they knew each other too well.

A long account also is given in Kings about Elijah. It runs through several chapters, and concludes with telling, 2 Kings, chap. ii. ver. 11, "And it came to pass, as they (Elijah and Elisha) still went on, and talked, that behold, there appeared *a chariot of fire and horses of fire*, and parted them both asunder, and Elijah *went up by a whirlwind into heaven.*" Hum! this the author of Chronicles, miraculous as the story is, makes no mention of, though he mentions Elijah by name; neither does he say any thing of the story related in the second chapter of the same book of Kings, of a parcel of children calling Elisha *bald head, bald head;* and that this *man of God*, ver. 24, "turned back, and looked upon them, *and cursed them in the name of the Lord;* and there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tore forty and two children of them." He also passes over in silence the story told, 2 Kings,

chap. xiii. that when they were burying a man in the sepulchre, where Elisha had been buried, it happened that the dead man, as they were letting him down, (ver. 21,) "touched the bones of Elisha, and he (the dead man) *revived, and stood upon his feet.*" The story does not tell us whether they buried the man notwithstanding he revived and stood upon his feet, or drew him up again. Upon all these stories, the writer of Chronicles is as silent as any writer of the present day, who did not choose to be accused of *lying*, or at least of romancing, would be about stories of the same kind.

But, however these two historians may differ from each other, with respect to the tales related by either, they are silent alike with respect to those men styled prophets, whose writings fill up the latter part of the Bible. Isaiah, who lived in the time of Hezekiah, is mentioned in Kings, and again in Chronicles, when these historians are speaking of that reign; but except in one or two instances at most, and those very slightly, none of the rest are so much as spoken of, or even hinted at; though, according to the Bible chronology, they lived within the time those histories were written; some of them long before. If those prophets, as they are called, were men of such importance in their day, as the compilers of the Bible, and priests, and commentators have since represented them to be, how can it be accounted for, that not one of these histories should say any thing about them?

The history in the books of Kings and of Chronicles is brought forward, as I have already said, to the year 588 before Christ; it will therefore be proper to examine, which of these prophets lived before that period.

Here follows a table of all the prophets, with the times in which they lived before Christ, according to the Chronology affixed to the first chapter of each of the books of the prophets; and also of the number of years they lived before the books of Kings and Chronicles were written.

Table of the Prophets, with the time in which they lived before Christ, and also before the books of Kings and Chronicles were written.

Names.	Years before Christ.	Yrs. before Kings and Chronicles.	Observations.
Isaiah - -	760	172	mentioned.
Jeremiah - -	629	41	mentioned only in the last c. of Chron.
Ezekiel - -	595	7	not mentioned.
Daniel - -	607	19	not mentioned.
Hosea - -	785	97	not mentioned.
Joel - -	800	212	not mentioned.
Amos - -	789	199	not mentioned.
Obadiah - -	789	199	not mentioned
Jonah - -	862	274	see the note.*
Micah - -	750	162	not mentioned.
Nahum - -	713	125	not mentioned.
Habakkuk - -	620	38	not mentioned.
Zephaniah - -	630	42	not mentioned.
Haggai, Zachariah, Malachi } after the year 588			

This table is either not very honourable for the Bible historians, or not very honorable for the Bible prophets; and I leave to priests, and commentators, who are very learned in little things, to settle the point of *etiquette* between the two; and to assign a reason, why the authors of Kings and Chronicles have treated those prophets, whom in the former part of the *Age of Reason*, I have considered as poets, with as much degrading silence as any historian of the present day would treat Peter Pindar.

I have one observation more to make on the book of Chronicles; after which I shall pass on to review the remaining books of the Bible.

In my observations on the book of Genesis, I have quoted a passage from the 36th chapter, verse 31, which evidently refers to a time, *after* that kings began to reign over the children of Israel; and I have shown that as this verse is verbatim the same as in Chronicles, chap. i. verse 43, where it stands consistently with the

* In 2 Kings, chap. xiv. ver. 25, the name of Jonah is mentioned on account of the restoration of a tract of land by Jeroboam; but nothing further is said of him, nor is any allusion made to the book of Jonah, nor to his expedition to Nineveh, nor to his encounter with the whale.

order of history, which in Genesis it does not, that the verse in Genesis, and a great part of the 36th chapter, have been taken from Chronicles; and that the book of Genesis, though it is placed first in the Bible, and ascribed to Moses, has been manufactured by some unknown person, after the book of Chronicles was written, which was not until at least eight hundred and sixty years after the time of Moses.

The evidence I proceed by to substantiate this is regular, and has in it but two stages. First, as I have already stated, that the passage in Genesis refers itself for *time* to Chronicles; secondly, that the book of Chronicles, to which this passage refers itself, was not *begun* to be written until at least eight hundred and sixty years after the time of Moses. To prove this, we have only to look into the thirteenth verse of the third chapter of the first book of Chronicles, where the writer, in giving the genealogy of the descendants of David, mentions Zedekiah; and it was in the time of Zedekiah, that Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem, 588 years before Christ, and consequently more than 860 years after Moses. Those who have superstitiously boasted of the antiquity of the Bible, and particularly of the books ascribed to Moses, have done it without examination, and without any authority than that of one credulous man telling it to another; for, so far as historical and chronological evidence applies, the very first book in the Bible is not so ancient as the book of Homer, by more than three hundred years, and is about the same age with Æsop's Fables.

I am not contending for the morality of Homer; on the contrary, I think it a book of false glory, tending to inspire immoral and mischievous notions of honour: and with respect to Æsop, though the moral is in general just, the fable is often cruel; and the cruelty of the fable does more injury to the heart, especially in a child, than the moral does good to the judgment

Having now dismissed Kings and Chronicles, I come to the next in course, the book of Ezra.

As one proof, among others, I shall produce, to show the disorder in which this pretended word of God, the Bible, has been put together, and the uncertainty of who the authors were, we have only to look at the three first verses in Ezra, and the two last in Chronicles; for by what kind of cutting and shuffling has it been that the three first verses in Ezra should be the two last

verses in Chronicles, or that the two last in Chronicles should be the three first in Ezra? Either the authors did not know their own works, or the compilers did not know the authors.

Two last Verses of Chronicles.

Ver. 22. Now in the first ear of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Lord, spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah, might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying.

23. Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, all the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of his people? the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up.

Three first Verses of Ezra.

Ver. 1. Now in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Lord, by the mouth of Jeremiah, might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

2. Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

3. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up, *to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (he is the God) which is in Jerusalem.*

The last verse in Chronicles is broken abruptly, and ends in the middle of a phrase with the word up, without signifying to what place. This abrupt break, and the appearance of the same verses in different books, show, as I have already said, the disorder and ignorance in which the Bible has been put together, and that the compilers of it had no authority for what they were doing, nor we any authority for believing what they have done.*

*I observed, as I passed along, several broken and senseless passages in the Bible, without thinking them of consequence enough to be introduced in the body of the work; such as that, 1 Samuel, chap. xiii. ver. 1, where it is said, "Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, Saul chose him three thousand men, &c." The first part of the verse, that Saul reigned one year has no sense, since it does not tell us what Saul did, nor say any thing of what happened at the end of that one year; and it is, besides, mere absurdity to say he reigned one year, when the very next phrase says

The only thing that has any appearance of certainty in the book of Ezra, is the time in which it was written, which was immediately after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, about 536 years before Christ. Ezra (who, according to the Jewish commentators, is the same person as is called Esdras in the Apocrypha) was one of the persons who returned, and who, it is probable, wrote the account of that affair. Nehemiah, whose book follows next to Ezra, was another of the returned persons; and who, it is also probable, wrote the account of the same affair, in the book that bears his name. But those accounts are nothing to us, nor to any other persons, unless it be to the Jews, as a part of the history of their nation; and there is just as much of the word of God in those books as there is in any of the histories of France, or Rapin's history of England, or the history of any other country.

But even in matters of historical record, neither of those writers are to be depended upon. In the second chapter of Ezra, the writer gives a list of the tribes and families, and of the precise number of souls of each that returned from Babylon to Jerusalem; and this enrolment of the persons so returned, appears to have been one of the principal objects for writing the book; but in this there is an error, that destroys the intention of the undertaking

he had reigned two; for if he had reigned two, it was impossible not to have reigned one.

Another instance occurs in Joshua, chap. v. where the writer tells us a story of an angel (for such the table of contents at the head of the chapter calls him,) appearing unto Joshua; and the story ends abruptly, and without any conclusion. The story is as follows:—Ver. 13, "And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand; and Joshua went unto him and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" Verse 14, "And he said, Nay; but as the captain of the hosts of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant?" Verse 15, "And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Lose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so." —And what then; nothing, for here the story ends, and the chapter too.

Either this story is broken off in the middle, or it is a story told by some Jewish humourist, in ridicule of Joshua's pretended mission from God; and the compilers of the Bible, not perceiving the design of the story, have told it as a serious matter. As a story of humour and ridicule, it has a great deal of point, for it pompously introduces an angel in the figure of a man, with a drawn sword in his hand, before whom Joshua falls on his face to the earth, and worships, (which is contrary to their second commandment;) and then, this most important embassy from heaven ends, in telling Joshua to pull off his shoe. It might as well have told him to pull up his breeches.

It is certain, however, that the Jews did not credit every thing their leaders told them, as appears from the cavalier manner in which they speak of Moses, when he was gone into the mount. "As for this Moses, say they, we wot not what is become of him." Exod. chap. x. xxii. ver. 1.

The writer begins his enrolment in the following manner:—chap. ii. ver. 3, "The children of Parosh, two thousand one hundred seventy and four." Verse 4, "The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two." And in this manner he proceeds through all the families; and in the 64th verse, he makes a total, and says, the whole congregation together was *forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore.*

But whoever will take the trouble of casting up the several particulars, will find that the total is but 29,818; so that the error is 12,542.* What certainty then can there be in the Bible for any thing?

Nehemiah, in like manner, gives a list of the returned families, and of the number of each family. He begins as in Ezra, by saying, chap. vii. ver. 8, "The children of Parosh, two thousand three hundred and seventy-two;" and so on through all the families. The list differs in several of the particulars from that of Ezra. In the 66th verse, Nehemiah makes a total, and says, as Ezra had said, "The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and three score." But the particulars of this list make a total but of 31,089, so that the error here is 11,271. These writers may do well enough for Bible-makers, but not for any thing where truth and exactness is necessary. The next book in course is the book of Esther. If Madam Esther thought it any honour to offer herself as a kept mistress to Ahasuerus, or as a rival to Queen Vashti, who had refused to come to a drunken king, in the midst of a drunken company, to be made a show of, (for the account says, they had been drinking seven days, and were merry,) let Esther and Mordecai look to that, it is no business of ours; at least, it is none of mine; besides which the

* *Particulars of the Families from the second chapter of Ezra.*

Chap. ii.		Bro't forw.	11,577	Bro't forw.	15,783	Bro't forw.	19,444
Verses 3	2172	Ver. 13	666	Ver. 23	128	Ver. 33	725
4	372	14	2056	24	42	34	345
5	775	15	454	25	743	35	3630
6	2812	16	98	26	621	36	973
7	1254	17	323	27	122	37	1052
8	945	18	112	28	223	38	1247
9	760	19	223	29	52	39	1017
10	642	20	95	30	156	40	74
11	623	21	123	31	1254	41	128
12	1222	22	56	32	320	42	139
						58	392
						60	652
	11,577		15,783		19,444	Total.	29,818

L. of C.

story has a great deal the appearance of being fabulous, and is also anonymous. I pass on to the book of Job.

The book of Job differs in character from all the books we have hitherto passed over. Treachery and murder make no part of this book; it is the meditations of a mind strongly impressed with the vicissitudes of human life, and by turns sinking under, and struggling against the pressure. It is a highly wrought composition, between willing submission and involuntary discontent; and shows man, as he sometimes is, more disposed to be resigned than he is capable of being. Patience has but a small share in the character of the person of whom the book treats; on the contrary, his grief is often impetuous; but he still endeavours to keep a guard upon it, and seems determined, in the midst of accumulating ills, to impose upon himself the hard duty of contentment.

I have spoken in a respectful manner of the book of Job in the former part of the *Age of Reason*, but without knowing at that time what I have learned since; which is, that from all the evidence that can be collected, the book of Job does not belong to the Bible.

I have seen the opinion of two Hebrew commentators, Abenezra and Spinoza, upon this subject; they both say that the book of Job carries no internal evidence of being an Hebrew book; that the genius of the composition, and the drama of the piece, are not Hebrew; that it has been translated from another language into Hebrew, and that the author of the book was a Gentile; that the character represented under the name of Satan (which is the first and only time this name is mentioned in the Bible) does not correspond to any Hebrew idea; and that the two convocations which the Deity is supposed to have made of those, whom the poem calls sons of God, and the familiarity which this supposed Satan is stated to have with the Deity, are in the same case.

It may also be observed, that the book shows itself to be the production of a mind cultivated in science, which the Jews, so far from being famous for, were very ignorant of. The allusions to objects of natural philosophy are frequent and strong, and are of a different cast to any thing in the books known to be Hebrew. The astronomical names, Pleiades, Orion, and Arcturus, are Greek, and not Hebrew names, and as it does not appear from any thing that is to be found in the Bible, that the Jews knew any thing of astronomy, or that they studied it, they had no translation

of those names into their own language, but adopted the names as they found them in the poem.

That the Jews did translate the literary productions of the Gentile nations into the Hebrew language, and mix them with their own, is not a matter of doubt; the thirty-first chapter of Proverbs is an evidence of this; it is there said, ver. 1, *The word of king Lemuel, the prophecy which his mother taught him.* This verse stands as a preface to the proverbs that follow, and which are not the proverbs of Solomon but of Lemuel; and this Lemuel was not one of the kings of Israel, nor of Judah, but of some other country, and consequently a Gentile. The Jews, however, have adopted his proverbs, and as they cannot give any account who the author of the book of Job was, or how they came by the book; and as it differs in character from the Hebrew writings, and stands totally unconnected with every other book and chapter in the Bible, before it, and after it, it has all the circumstantial evidence of being originally a book of the Gentiles.*

The Bible-makers, and those regulators of time, the Chronologists, appear to have been at a loss where to place, and how to dispose of the book of Job; for it contains no one historical circumstance, nor allusion to any, that might serve to determine its place in the Bible. But it would not have answered the purpose of these men to have informed the world of their ignorance; and, therefore, they have affixed it to the æra of 1520 years before Christ which is during the time the Israelites were in Egypt, and for which they have just as much authority and no more than I should have for saying it was a thousand years before that period. The probability, however, is, that it is older than any book in the

* The prayer known by the name of *Agur's Prayer*, in the 30th chapter of proverbs, immediately preceding the proverbs of Lemuel, and which is the only sensible, well-conceived, and well-expressed prayer in the Bible, has much the appearance of being a prayer taken from the Gentiles. The name of Agur occurs on no other occasion than this; and he is introduced, together with the prayer ascribed to him, in the same manner, and nearly in the same words, that Lemuel and his proverbs are introduced in the chapter that follows. The first verse of the 30th chapter says, "The words of Agur, the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy;" here the word prophecy is used with the same application it has in the following chapter of Lemuel, unconnected with any thing of prediction. The prayer of Agur is in the 8th and 9th verses, "*Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither riches nor poverty, but feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord! or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*" This has not any of the marks of being a Jewish prayer, for the Jews never prayed but when they were in trouble, and never for any thing but victory, vengeance, and riches.

Bible; and it is the only one that can be read without indignation or disgust.

We know nothing of what the ancient Gentile world (as it is called) was before the time of the Jews, whose practice has been to calumniate and blacken the character of all other nations; and it is from the Jewish accounts that we have learned to call them heathens. But, as far as we know to the contrary, they were a just and moral people, and not addicted, like the Jews, to cruelty and revenge, but of whose profession of faith we are unacquainted. It appears to have been their custom to personify both virtue and vice by statues and images, as is done now-a-days both by statuary and by painting; but it does not follow from this, that they worshipped them any more than we do. I pass on to the book of

Psalms, of which it is not necessary to make much observation. Some of them are moral, and others are very revengeful; and the greater part relates to certain local circumstances of the Jewish nation at the time they were written, with which we have nothing to do. It is, however, an error or an imposition to call them the Psalms of David: they are a collection, as song-books are now-a-days, from different song-writers, who lived at different times. The 137th Psalm could not have been written till more than 400 years after the time of David, because it is written in commemoration of an event, the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, which did not happen till that distance of time. "*By the rivers of Babylon we sat down; yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows, in the midst thereof; for there they that carried us away captive, required of us a song, saying, sing us one of the songs of Zion.*" As a man would say to an American, or to a Frenchman, or to an Englishman, sing us one of your American songs, or your French songs, or your English songs. This remark with respect to the time this Psalm was written, is of no other use than to show (among others already mentioned) the general imposition the world has been under, with respect to the authors of the Bible. No regard has been paid to time, place, and circumstance; and the names of persons have been affixed to the several books, which it was as impossible they should write, as that a man should walk in procession at his own funeral.

The Book of Proverbs. These, like the Psalms, are a collection, and that from authors belonging to other nations than those

of the Jewish nation, as I have shown in the observations upon the book of Job; besides which, some of the proverbs ascribed to Solomon, did not appear till two hundred and fifty years after the death of Solomon; for it is said in the 1st verse of the 25th chapter, "*These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, copied out.*" It was two hundred and fifty years from the time of Solomon to the time of Hezekiah. When a man is famous and his name is abroad, he is made the putative father of things he never said or did; and this, most probably, has been the case with Solomon. It appears to have been the fashion of that day to make proverbs, as it is now to make jest-books, and father them upon those who never saw them.

The Book of *Ecclesiastes*, or the *Preacher*, is also ascribed to Solomon, and that with much reason, if not with truth. It is written as the solitary reflections of a worn-out debauchee, such as Solomon was, who looking back on scenes he can no longer enjoy, cries out, *All is vanity!* A great deal of the metaphor and of the sentiment is obscure, most probably by translation; but enough is left to show they were strongly pointed in the original.* From what is transmitted to us of the character of Solomon, he was witty, ostentatious, dissolute, and at last melancholy. He lived fast, and died, tired of the world, at the age of fifty-eight years.

Seven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines, are worse than none; and, however it may carry with it the appearance of heightened enjoyment, it defeats all the felicity of affection, by leaving it no point to fix upon; divided love is never happy. This was the case with Solomon; and if he could not, with all his pretensions to wisdom, discover it beforehand, he merited, unpitied, the mortification he afterwards endured. In this point of view, his preaching is unnecessary, because, to know the consequences, it is only necessary to know the cause. Seven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines, would have stood in place of the whole book. It was needless after this to say, that all was vanity and vexation of spirit; for it is impossible to derive happiness from the company of those whom we deprive of happiness.

To be happy in old age, it is necessary that we accustom ourselves to objects that can accompany the mind all the way through life, and that we take the rest as good in their day. The mere

* *Those that look out of the window shall be darkened*, is an obscure figure in translation for loss of sight.

man of pleasure is miserable in old age; and the mere drudge in business is but little better: whereas, natural philosophy, mathematical and mechanical science, are a continual source of tranquil pleasure; and in spite of the gloomy dogmas of priests, and of superstition, the study of those things is the study of the true theology; it teaches man to know and to admire the Creator, for the principles of science are in the creation, and are unchangeable, and of divine origin.

Those who knew Benjamin Franklin will recollect, that his mind was ever young; his temper ever serene: science, that never grows grey, was always his mistress. He was never without an object, for when we cease to have an object, we become like an invalid in an hospital waiting for death.

Solomon's Songs are amorous and foolish enough, but which wrinkled fanaticism has called divine. The compilers of the Bible have placed these songs after the book of Ecclesiastes; and the Chronologists have affixed to them the æra of 1014 years before Christ, at which time Solomon, according to the same chronology, was nineteen years of age, and was then forming his seraglio of wives and concubines. The Bible-makers and the Chronologists should have managed this matter a little better, and either have said nothing about the time, or chosen a time less inconsistent with the supposed divinity of those songs; for Solomon was then in the honey-moon of one thousand debaucheries.

It should also have occurred to them, that as he wrote, if he did write, the book of Ecclesiastes, long after these songs, and in which he exclaims, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit; that he included those songs in that description. This is the more probable, because he says, or somebody for him, Ecclesiastes, chap. ii. v. 8, "*I got me men singers, and women singers*, (most probably to sing those songs,) *and musical instruments of all sorts;* and behold (ver. 11,) all was vanity and vexation of spirit." The compilers, however, have done their work but by halves; for as they have given us the songs, they should have given us the tunes, that we might sing them.

The books, called the books of the Prophets, fill up all the remaining parts of the Bible; they are sixteen in number, beginning with Isaiah, and ending with Malachi, of which I have given you a list in my observations upon Chronicles. Of these sixteen prophets, all of whom, except the three last, lived within the time

the books of Kings and Chronicles were written; two only, Isaiah and Jeremiah, are mentioned in the history of those books. I shall begin with those two, reserving what I have to say on the general character of the men called prophets to another part of the work.

Whoever will take the trouble of reading the book ascribed to Isaiah, will find it one of the most wild and disorderly compositions ever put together; it has neither beginning, middle, nor end; and, except a short historical part, and a few sketches of history in two or three of the first chapters, is one continued incoherent, bombastical rant, full of extravagant metaphor, without application, and destitute of meaning; a school-boy would scarcely have been excusable for writing such stuff; it is (at least in the translation) that kind of composition and false taste, that is properly called prose run mad.

The historical part begins at the 36th chapter, and is continued to the end of the 39th chapter. It relates to some matters that are said to have passed during the reign of Hezekiah, king of Judah, at which time Isaiah lived. This fragment of history begins and ends abruptly; it has not the least connection with the chapter that precedes it, nor with that which follows it, nor with any other in the book. It is probable that Isaiah wrote this fragment himself, because he was an actor in the circumstances it treats of; but, except this part, there are scarcely two chapters that have any connection with each other; one is entitled, at the beginning of the first verse, the burden of Babylon; another, the burden of Moab; another, the burden of Damascus; another, the burden of Egypt; another, the burden of the Desart of the Sea; another, the burden of the Valley of Vision; as you would say, the story of the knight of the burning mountain, the story of Cinderella, or the children of the wood, &c. &c.

I have already shown, in the instance of the two last verses of Chronicles, and the three first in Ezra, that the compilers of the Bible mixed and confounded the writings of different authors with each other, which alone, were there no other cause, is sufficient to destroy the authenticity of any compilation, because it is more than presumptive evidence that the compilers are ignorant who the authors were. A very glaring instance of this occurs in the book ascribed to Isaiah, the latter part of the 44th chapter, and the beginning of the 45th, so far from having been written by

Isaiah, could only have been written by some person who lived, at least, an hundred an fifty years after Isaiah was dead.

These chapters are a compliment to *Cyrus*, who permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem from the Babylonian captivity, to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, as is stated in Ezra. The last verse of the 44th chapter, and the beginning of the 45th, are in the following words: "*That saith of Cyrus, he is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem, thou shalt be built; and to the temple thy foundations shall be laid: thus saith the Lord to his annointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden to subdue nations before him, and I will loose the loins of kings to open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, &c.*"

What audacity of church and priestly ignorance it is to impose this book upon the world as the writing of Isaiah, when Isaiah, according to their own chronology, died soon after the death of Hezekiah, which was 698 years before Christ; and the decree of Cyrus, in favour of the Jews returning to Jerusalem, was, according to the same chronology, 536 years before Christ; which was a distance of time between the two of 162 years. I do not suppose that the compilers of the Bible made these books, but rather that they picked up some loose, anonymous essays, and put them together under the name of such authors as best suited their purpose. They have encouraged the imposition, which is next to inventing it; for it was impossible but they must have observed it.

When we see the studied craft of the scripture-makers, in making every part of this romantic book of school-boy's eloquence, bend to the monstrous idea of a Son of God, begotten by a ghost on the body of a virgin, there is no imposition we are not justified in suspecting them of. Every phrase and circumstance are marked with the barbarous hand of superstitious torture, and forced into meanings it was impossible they could have. The head of every chapter, and the top of every page, are blazoned with the names of Christ and the church, that the unwary reader might suck in the error before he began to read.

Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, Isaiah, chap. vii. ver. 14, has been interpreted to mean the person called Jesus Christ, and his mother Mary, and has been echoed through christendom for more than a thousand years; and such has been the rage of this opinion, that scarcely a spot in it but has been stained

with blood and marked with desolation in consequence of it. Though it is not my intention to enter into controversy on subjects of this kind, but to confine myself to show that the Bible is spurious; and thus, by taking away the foundation, to overthrow at once the whole structure of superstition raised thereon; I will, however, stop a moment, to expose the fallacious application of this passage.

Whether Isaiah was playing a trick with Ahaz, king of Judah, to whom this passage is spoken, is no business of mine; I mean only to show the misapplication of the passage, and that it has no more reference to Christ and his mother than it has to me and my mother. The story is simply this:

The king of Syria and the king of Israel (I have already mentioned that the Jews were split into two nations, one of which was called Judah, the capital of which was Jerusalem, and the other Israel) made war jointly against Ahaz, king of Judah, and marched their armies towards Jerusalem. Ahaz and his people became alarmed, and the account says, ver. 2, "*Their hearts were moved as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.*"

In this situation of things, Isaiah addresses himself to Ahaz, and assures him in the *name of the Lord* (the cant phrase of all the prophets) that these two kings should not succeed against him; and to satisfy Ahaz that this should be the case, tells him to ask a sign. This, the account says, Ahaz declined doing; giving as a reason that he would not tempt the Lord; upon which Isaiah, who is the speaker, says, ver. 14, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; *behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son;*" and the 16th verse says, "*And before this child shall know to refuse the evil, and chuse the good*, the land which thou abhorrest or dreadest (meaning Syria and the kingdom of Israel) shall be forsaken of both her kings." Here then was the sign, and the time limited for the completion of the assurance or promise; namely, before this child should know to refuse the evil and chuse the good.

Isaiah having committed himself thus far, it became necessary to him, in order to avoid the imputation of being a false prophet, and the consequence thereof, to take measures to make this sign appear. It certainly was not a difficult thing, in any time of the world, to find a girl with child, or to make her so; and perhaps Isaiah knew of one before-hand; for I do not suppose that the

prophets of that day were any more to be trusted than the priests of this: be that, however, as it may, he says in the next chapter, ver. 2, "And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, and *I went unto the prophetess, and she conceived and bare a son.*"

Here then is the whole story, foolish as it is, of this child and this virgin; and it is upon the bare-faced perversion of this story, that the book of Matthew, and the impudence and sordid interests of priests in latter times, have founded a theory which they call the gospel; and have applied this story to signify the person they call Jesus Christ; begotten, they say, by a ghost, whom they call holy, on the body of a woman, engaged in marriage, and afterwards married, whom they call a virgin, 700 years after this foolish story was told; a theory which, speaking for myself, I hesitate not to believe, and to say, is as fabulous and false as God is true.*

But to show the imposition and falsehood of Isaiah, we have only to attend to the sequel of this story; which, though it is passed over in silence in the book of Isaiah, is related in the 28th chapter of the second Chronicles; and which is, that instead of these two kings failing in their attempt against Ahaz, king of Judah, as Isaiah had pretended to foretel in the name of the Lord, they succeeded; Ahaz was defeated and destroyed; an hundred and twenty thousand of his people were slaughtered; Jerusalem was plundered, and two hundred thousand women, and sons and daughters, carried into captivity. Thus much for this lying prophet and imposter Isaiah, and the book of falsehoods that bears his name. I pass on to the book of

Jeremiah. This prophet, as he is called, lived in the time that Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, in the reign of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah; and the suspicion was strong against him, that he was a traitor in the interest of Nebuchadnezzar. Every thing relating to Jeremiah shows him to have been a man of an equivocal character: in his metaphor of the potter and the clay, c. xviii. he guards his prognostications in such a crafty manner, as always to leave himself a door to escape by, in case the event should be contrary to what he had predicted.

* In the 14th verse of the viith chapter, it is said, that the child should be called Immanuel; but this name was not given to either of the children, otherwise than as a character which the word signifies. That of the prophetess was called Maher-shalal-hash-baz, and that of Mary was called Jesus.

In the 7th and 8th verses of that chapter, he makes the Almighty to say, "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and destroy it: if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent me of the evil that I thought to do unto them." Here was a proviso against one side of the case: now for the other side.

Verses 9 and 10, "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice: then I will repent me of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them." Here is a proviso against the other side; and, according to this plan of prophesying, a prophet could never be wrong, however mistaken the Almighty might be. This sort of absurd subterfuge, and this manner of speaking of the Almighty, as one would speak of a man, is consistent with nothing but the stupidity of the Bible.

As to the authenticity of the book, it is only necessary to read it in order to decide positively, that, though some passages recorded therein may have been spoken by Jeremiah, he is not the author of the book. The historical parts, if they can be called by that name, are in the most confused condition; the same events are several times repeated, and that in a manner different, and sometimes in contradiction to each other; and this disorder runs even to the last chapter, where the history, upon which the greater part of the book has been employed, begins a-new, and ends abruptly. The book has all the appearance of being a medley of unconnected anecdotes, respecting persons and things of that time, collected together in the same rude manner as if the various and contradictory accounts, that are to be found in a bundle of newspapers, respecting persons and things of the present day, were put together without date, order or explanation. I will give two or three examples of this kind.

It appears, from the account of the 37th chapter, that the army of Nebuchadnezzar, which is called the army of the Chaldeans, had besieged Jerusalem some time; and on their hearing that the army of Pharaoh, of Egypt, was marching against them, they raised the seige, and retreated for a time. It may here be proper to mention, in order to understand this confused history, that Nebuchadnezzar had besieged and taken Jerusalem, during the reign of Jehoakim, the predecessor of Zedekiah; and that it was Nebu-

chadnezzar who had made Zedekiah king, or rather viceroy; and that this second siege, of which the book of Jeremiah treats, was in consequence of the revolt of Zedekiah against Nebuchadnezzar. This will in some measure account for the suspicion that affixes itself to Jeremiah, of being a traitor, and in the interest of Nebuchadnezzar; whom Jeremiah calls, in the 43rd chap. ver. 10, the servant of God.

The 11th verse of this chapter, (the 37th,) says, "And it came to pass, that, when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem, for fear of Pharaoh's army, that Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem, to go (as this account states) into the land of Benjamin, to separate himself thence in the midst of the people; and when he was in the gate of Benjamin a captain of the ward was there, whose name was Irijah; and he took Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans; then Jeremiah said, It is false, I fall not away to the Chaldeans." Jeremiah being thus stopped and accused, was, after being examined, committed to prison, on suspicion of being a traitor, where he remained, as is stated in the last verse of this chapter.

But the next chapter gives an account of the imprisonment of Jeremiah, which has no connexion with this account, but ascribes his imprisonment to another circumstance, and for which we must go back to the 21st chapter. It is there stated, ver. 1, that Zedekiah sent Pashur, the son of Malchiah, and Zephaniah, the son of Maaseiah the priest, to Jeremiah, to enquire of him concerning Nebuchadnezzar, whose army was then before Jerusalem; and Jeremiah said to them, ver. 8, "Thus saith the Lord, Behold I set before you the way of life, and the way of death; he that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence; but he that goeth out and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey."

This interview and conference breaks off abruptly at the end of the 10th verse of the 21st chapter; and such is the disorder of this book, that we have to pass over sixteen chapters, upon various subjects, in order to come at the continuation and event of this conference; and this brings us to the first verse of the 38th chapter, as I have just mentioned.

The 38th chapter opens with saying, "Then Shapatiah, the son of Mattan; Gedaliah, the son of Pashur; and Jucal, the son of

Shelemiah; and Pashur, the son of Malchiah; (here are more persons mentioned than in the 21st chapter,) heard the words that Jeremiah spoke unto the people, saying, *Thus saith the Lord, He that remaineth in this city, shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence; but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live; for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live;* (which are the words of the conference,) therefore, (say they to Zedekiah,) We beseech thee, let us put this man to death, *for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people in speaking such words unto them; for this man seeketh not the welfare of the people, but the hurt:*" and at the 6th verse it is said, "Then they took Jeremiah, and put him into a dungeon of Malchiah."

These two accounts are different and contradictory. The one ascribes his imprisonment to his attempt to escape out of the city; the other to his preaching and prophesying in the city; the one to his being seized by the guard at the gate; the other to his being accused before Zedekiah, by the conferees.*

In the next chapter (the 39th) we have another instance of the disordered state of this book: for notwithstanding the siege of the

* I observed two chapters, 16th and 17th, in the first book of Samuel, that contradict each other with respect to David, and the manner he became acquainted with Saul; as the 37th and 38th chapters of the book of Jeremiah contradict each other with respect to the cause of Jeremiah's imprisonment.

In the 16th chapter of Samuel, it is said, that an evil spirit of God troubled Saul, and that his servants advised him (as a remedy) "to seek out a man who was a cunning player upon the harp." And Saul said, ver. 17, "Provide now a man that can play well, and bring him unto me." Then answered one of his servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse, the Bethlemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him; wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, "Send me David, thy son." And [verse 21] David came to Saul, and stood before him, and he loved him greatly, and he became his armour-bearer; and when the evil spirit of God was upon Saul, [verse 23] David took his harp, and played with his hand, and Saul was refreshed, and was well.

But the next chapter [17] gives an account, all different to this, of the manner that Saul and David became acquainted. Here it is ascribed to David's encounter with Goliah, when David was sent by his father to carry provision to his brethren in the camp. In the 55th verse of this chapter it is said, "And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine [Goliah] he said to Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell. And the king said, Inquire thou whose son the stripling is. And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with the head of the Philistine in his hand; and Saul said unto him, Whose son art thou, thou young man? And David answered, "I am the son of thy servant Jesse, the Bethlemite." These two accounts belie each other, because each of them supposes Saul and David not to have known each other before. This book, the Bible, is too ridiculous even for criticism.

city, by Nebuchadnezzar, has been the subject of several of the preceding chapters, particularly the 37th and 38th, the 39 chapter begins as if not a word had been said upon the subject; and as if the reader was to be informed of every particular respecting it; for it begins with saying, ver. 1, "*In the ninth year of Zedekiah, king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and all his army, against Jerusalem, and besieged it, &c. &c.*"

But the instance in the last chapter (the 52d) is still more glaring; for though the story has been told over and over again, this chapter still supposes the reader not to know any thing of it, for it begins by saying, ver. 1, "*Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem, and his mother's name was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah,* (ver. 4.) *and it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it, &c. &c.*"

It is not possible that any one man, and more particularly Jeremiah, could have been the writer of this book. The errors are such as could not have been committed by any person sitting down to compose a work. Were I, or any other man, to write in such a disordered manner, nobody would read what was written; and every body would suppose that the writer was in a state of insanity. The only way, therefore, to account for this disorder, is, that the book is a medley of detached unauthenticated anecdotes, put together by some stupid book-maker, under the name of Jeremiah; because many of them refer to him, and to the circumstances of the times he lived in.

Of the duplicity, and of the false predictions of Jeremiah, I shall mention two instances, and then proceed to review the remainder of the Bible.

It appears from the 38th chapter, that when Jeremiah was in prison, Zedekiah sent for him, and at this interview, which was private, Jeremiah pressed it strongly on Zedekiah to surrender himself to the enemy. "*If,*" says he, (ver. 17,) "*thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, &c.*" Zedekiah was apprehensive that what passed at this conference should be known; and he said to Jeremiah, (ver. 25,) "If the princes (meaning those of Judah) hear that I have talked

with thee, and they come unto thee, and say unto thee, Declare unto us now what thou hast said unto the king; hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death; and also what the king said unto thee; then thou shalt say unto them, I presented my supplication before the king; that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house to die there. Then came all the princes unto Jeremiah, and asked him, and *he told them according to all the words the king had commanded.*" Thus, this man of God, as he is called, could tell a lie, or very strongly prevaricate, when he supposed it would answer his purpose; for certainly he did not go to Zedekiah to make his supplication, neither did he make it; he went because he was sent for, and he employed that opportunity to advise Zedekiah to surrender himself to Nebuchadnezzar.

In the 34th chapter, is a prophecy of Jeremiah to Zedekiah, in these words, (ver. 2,) "Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will give this city into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he will burn it with fire; and thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but that thou shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand; and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon. *Yet hear the word of the Lord; O Zedekiah, king of Judah, thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not die by the sword, but thou shalt die in peace; and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings that were before thee, so shall they burn odours for thee, and they will lament thee, saying, Ah, Lord; for I have pronounced the word, saith the Lord.*"

Now, instead of Zedekiah beholding the eyes of the king of Babylon, and speaking with him mouth to mouth, and dying in peace, and with the burning of odours, as at the funeral of his fathers, (as Jeremiah had declared the Lord himself had pronounced,) the reverse, according to the 52d chapter, was the case; it is there said, (ver. 10,) "That the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death." What then can we say of these prophets, but that they are impostors and liars?

As for Jeremiah, he experienced none of those evils. He was taken into favour by Nebuchadnezzar, who gave him in charge to the captain of the guard, (chap. xxxix. ver. 12,) "Take him (said

he) and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee." Jeremiah joined himself afterwards to Nebuchadnezzar, and went about prophesying for him against the Egyptians, who had marched to the relief of Jerusalem while it was besieged. Thus much for another of the lying prophets, and the book that bears his name.

I have been the more particular in treating of the books ascribed to Isaiah and Jeremiah, because those two are spoken of in the books of Kings and of Chronicles, which the others are not. The remainder of the books ascribed to the men called prophets, I shall not trouble myself much about; but take them collectively into the observations I shall offer on the character of the men styled prophets.

In the former part of the *Age of Reason*, I have said that the word prophet was the Bible word for poet, and that the flights and metaphors of Jewish poets have been foolishly erected into what are now called prophecies. I am sufficiently justified in this opinion, not only because the books called the prophecies are written in poetical language, but because there is no word in the Bible, except it be the word prophet, that describes what we mean by a poet. I have also said, that the word signifies a performer upon musical instruments, of which I have given some instances; such as that of a company of prophets prophesying with psalteries, with tabrets, with pipes, with harps, &c. and that Saul prophesied with them, 1 Sam. chap. x. ver. 5. It appears from this passage, and from other parts in the book of Samuel, that the word prophet was confined to signify poetry and music; for the person who was supposed to have a visionary insight into concealed things, was not a prophet but a *seer*,* (1 Sam. chap. ix. ver. 9;) and it was not till after the word *seer* went out of use (which most probably was when Saul banished those he called wizards) that the profession of the seer, or the art of seeing, became incorporated into the word prophet.

According to the *modern* meaning of the word prophet and prophesying, it signifies foretelling events to a great distance of time; and it became necessary to the inventors of the gospel to give it this latitude of meaning, in order to apply or to stretch what they

* I know not what is the Hebrew word that corresponds to the word seer in English; but I observe it is translated into French by La Voyant, from the verb *voir* to *see;* and which means the person who *sees*, or the seer.

call the prophecies of the Old Testament, to the times of the New; but according to the Old Testament, the prophesying of the seer, and afterwards of the prophet, so far as the meaning of the word seer was incorporated into that of prophet, had reference only to things of the time then passing, or very closely connected with it; such as the event of a battle they were going to engage in, or of a journey, or of any enterprise they were going to undertake, or of any circumstance then pending, or of any difficulty they were then in; all of which had immediate reference to themselves (as in the case already mentioned of Ahaz and Isaiah with respect to the expression, *Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son,*) and not to any distant future time. It was that kind of prophesying that corresponds to what we call fortune-telling; such as casting nativities, predicting riches, fortunate or unfortunate marriages, conjuring for lost goods, &c.; and it is the fraud of the Christian church, not that of the Jews; and the ignorance and the superstition of modern, not that of ancient times, that elevated those poetical—musical—conjuring—dreaming—strolling gentry, into the rank they have since had.

But, besides this general character of all the prophets, they had also a particular character. They were in parties, and they prophesied for or against, according to the party they were with; as the poetical and political writers of the present day write in defence of the party they associate with against the other.

After the Jews were divided into two nations, that of Judah and that of Israel, each party had its prophets, who abused and accused each other of being false prophets, lying prophets, impostors, &c.

The prophets of the party of Judah prophesied against the prophets of the party of Israel; and those of the party of Israel against those of Judah. This party prophesying showed itself immediately on the separation under the first two rival kings, Rehoboam and Jeroboam. The prophet that cursed, or prophesied against the altar that Jeroboam had built in Bethel, was of the party of Judah, where Rehoboam was king; and he was way-laid, on his return home, by a prophet of the party of Israel, who said unto him, (1 Kings chap. x.) "*Art thou the man of God that came from Judah? and he said, I am.*" Then the prophet of the party of Israel said to him, "*I am a prophet also, as thou art,* (signifying of Judah,) *and an angel spake unto me by the word of*

the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee unto thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water: but (says the 18th verse) *he lied unto him.*" This event, however, according to the story, is, that the prophet of Judah never got back to Judah, for he was found dead on the road, by the contrivance of the prophet of Israel, who, no doubt, was called a true prophet by his own party, and the prophet of Judah a lying prophet.

In the third chapter of the second of Kings, a story is related of prophesying or conjuring, that shows, in several particulars, the character of a prophet. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and Joram, king of Israel, had for a while ceased their party animosity, and entered into an alliance; and these two, together with the king of Edom, engaged in a war against the king of Moab. After uniting, and marching their armies, the story says, they were in great distress for water, upon which Jehoshaphat, said, "*Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, that we may enquire of the Lord by him? and one of the servants of the king of Israel said here is Elisha.* (Elisha was of the party of Judah.) *And Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, said, The word of the Lord is with him.*" The story then says, that these three kings went down to Elisha; and when Elisha (who, as I have said, was a Judahmite prophet) saw the king of Israel, he said unto him, "*What have I to do with thee, get thee to the prophets of thy father and the prophets of thy mother. Nay but, said the king of Israel, the Lord hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hands of the king of Moab,*" (meaning because of the distress they were in for water;) upon which Elisha said, "*As the Lord of hosts liveth before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regarded Je hoshaphat, king of Judah, I would not look towards thee, nor see thee.*" Here is all the venom and vulgarity of a party prophet.—We have now to see the performance, or manner of prophesying.

Ver. 15. "*Bring me,*" said Elisha, "*a minstrel; and it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him.*" Here is the farce of the conjuror. Now for the prophecy: "*And Elisha said,* (singing most probably to the tune he was playing,) *Thus saith the Lord, Make this valley full of ditches;*" which was just telling them what every countryman could have told them, without either fiddle or farce, that the way to get water was to dig for it.

But as every conjuror is not famous alike for the same thing,

so neither were those prophets; for though all of them, at least those I have spoken of, were famous for lying, some of them excelled in cursing. Elisha, whom I have just mentioned, was a chief in this branch of prophesying; it was he that cursed the forty-two children in the name of the Lord, whom the two she-bears came and devoured. We are to suppose that those children were of the party of Israel; but as those who will curse will lie, there is just as much credit to be given to this story of Elisha's two she-bears as there is to that of the Dragon of Wantley, of whom it is said.—

> Poor children three devoured he,
> That could not with him grapple;
> And at one sup he eat them up,
> As a man would eat an apple.

There was another description of men called prophets, that amused themselves with dreams and visions; but whether by night or by day, we know not. These, if they were not quite harmless, were but little mischievous. Of this class are

Ezekiel and Daniel; and the first question upon those books, as upon all the others, is, are they genuine? that is, were they written by Ezekiel and Daniel?

Of this there is no proof; but so far as my own opinion goes, I am more inclined to believe they were, than that they were not. My reasons for this opinion are as follow: First, Because those books do not contain internal evidence to prove they were not written by Ezekiel and Daniel, as the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, Samuel, &c. &c. prove they were not written by Moses, Joshua, Samuel, &c.

Secondly, Because they were not written till after the Babylonish captivity began; and there is good reason to believe, that not any book in the Bible was written before that period: at least, it is proveable, from the books themselves, as I have already shown, that they were not written till after the commencement of the Jewish monarchy.

Thirdly, Because the manner in which the books ascribed to Ezekiel and Daniel are written, agrees with the condition these men were in at the time of writing them.

Had the numerous commentators and priests, who have foolishly employed or wasted their time in pretending to expound and unriddle those books, have been carried into captivity, as Ezekiel and Daniel were, it would have greatly improved their intellects, in comprehending the reason for this mode of writing, and have

saved them the trouble of racking their invention, as they have done, to no purpose; for they would have found that themselves would be obliged to write whatever they had to write, respecting their own affairs, or those of their friends, or of their country, in a concealed manner, as those men have done.

These two books differ from all the rest; for it is only these that are filled with accounts of dreams and visions: and this difference arose from the situation the writers were in as prisoners of war, or prisoners of state, in a foreign country, which obliged them to convey even the most trifling information to each other, and all their political projects or opinions, in obscure and metaphorical terms. They pretend to have dreamed dreams, and seen visions, because it was unsafe for them to speak facts or plain language. We ought, however, to suppose, that the persons to whom they wrote, understood what they meant, and that it was not intended any body else should. But these busy commentators and priests have been puzzling their wits to find out what it was not intended they should know, and with which they have nothing to do.

Ezekiel and Daniel were carried prisoners to Babylon, under the first captivity, in the time of Jehoiakim, nine years before the second captivity in the time of Zedekiah. The Jews were then still numerous, and had considerable force at Jerusalem; and as it is natural to suppose that men in the situation of Ezekiel and Daniel, would be meditating the recovery of their country, and their own deliverance, it is reasonable to suppose, that the accounts of dreams and visions, with which these books are filled, are no other than a disguised mode of correspondence, to facilitate those objects: it served them as a cypher, or secret alphabet. If they are not this, they are tales, reveries, and nonsense; or, at least, a fanciful way of wearing off the wearisomeness of captivity; but the presumption is, they were the former.

Ezekiel begins his books by speaking of a vision of *cherubims*, and of a *wheel within a wheel*, which he says he saw by the river Chebar, in the land of his captivity. Is it not reasonable to suppose, that by the cherubims, he meant the temple at Jerusalem, where they had figures of cherubims? and by a wheel within a wheel (which, as a figure, has always been understood to signify political contrivance) the project or means of recovering Jerusalem? In the latter part of this book, he supposes himself trans-

ported to Jerusalem, and into the temple; and he refers back to the vision on the river Chebar, and says, (chap. xliii. ver. 3,) that this last vision was like the vision on the river Chebar; which indicates, that those pretended dreams and visions had for their object the recovery of Jerusalem, and nothing further.

As to the romantic interpretations and applications, wild as the dreams and visions they undertake to explain, which commentators and priests have made of those books, that of converting them into things which they call prophecies, and making them bend to times and circumstances, as far remote even as the present day, it shows the fraud or the extreme folly to which credulity or priestcraft can go.

Scarcely any thing can be more absurd, than to suppose that men situated as Ezekiel and Daniel were, whose country was over-run, and in the possession of the enemy, all their friends and relations in captivity abroad, or in slavery at home, or massacred, or in continual danger of it; scarcely any thing, I say, can be more absurd, than to suppose that such men should find nothing to do but that of employing their time and their thoughts about what was to happen to other nations a thousand or two thousand years after they were dead; at the same time, nothing is more natural, than that they should meditate the recovery of Jerusalem, and their own deliverance; and that this was the sole object of all the obscure and apparently frantic writings contained in those books.

In this sense, the mode of writing used in those two books being forced by necessity, and not adopted by choice, is not irrational; but if we are to use the books as prophecies, they are false. In the 29th chapter of Ezekiel, speaking of Egypt, it is said, (ver. 11,) "*No foot of man should pass through it, nor foot of beast should pass through it; neither shall it be inhabited for forty years.*" This is what never came to pass, and consequently it is false, as all the books I have already reviewed are. I here close this part of the subject.

In the former part of the *Age of Reason* I have spoken of Jonah, and of the story of him and the whale. A fit story for ridicule, if it was written to be believed; or of laughter, if it was intended to try what credulity could swallow; for if it could swallow Jonah and the whale, it could swallow any thing.

But, as is already shown in the observations on the book of Job, and of Proverbs, it is not always certain which of the books in the

Bible are originally Hebrew or only translations from books of the Gentiles into Hebrew; and, as the book of Jonah, so far from treating of the affairs of the Jews, says nothing upon that subject, but treats altogether of the Gentiles, it is more probable that it is a book of the Gentiles than of the Jews; and that it has been written as a fable, to expose the nonsense and satirise the vicious and malignant character of a Bible prophet, or a predicting priest.

Jonah is represented, first, as a disobedient prophet, running away from his mission, and taking shelter aboard a vessel of the Gentiles, bound from Joppa to Tarshish; as if he ignorantly supposed, by such a paltry contrivance, he could hide himself where God could not find him. The vessel is overtaken by a storm at sea; and the mariners, all of whom are Gentiles, believing it to be a judgment, on account of some one on board who had committed a crime, agreed to cast lots, to discover the offender; and the lot fell upon Jonah. But, before this, they had cast all their wares and merchandise overboard, to lighten the vessel, while Jonah, like a stupid fellow, was fast asleep in the hold.

After the lot had designated Jonah to be the offender, they questioned him to know who and what he was? and he told them *he was an Hebrew;* and the story implies that he confessed himself to be guilty. But these Gentiles instead of sacrificing him at once, without pity or mercy, as a company of Bible-prophets or priests would have done by a Gentile in the same case, and as it is related Samuel had done by Agag, and Moses by the women and children, they endeavoured to save him, though at the risk of their own lives; for the account says, "*Nevertheless* (that is, though Jonah was a Jew, and a foreigner, and the cause of all their misfortunes, and the loss of their cargo) *the men rowed hard to bring the boat to land, but they could not, for the sea wrought and was tempestuous against them.*" Still, however, they were unwilling to put the fate of the lot into execution; and they cried (says the account) unto the Lord, saying, "*We beseech thee, O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood; for thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee.*" Meaning thereby, that they did not presume to judge Jonah guilty, since that he might be innocent; but that they considered the lot that had fallen upon him as a decree of God, or as it *pleased God.* The address of this prayer shows that the Gentiles worshipped one *Supreme Being*, and that they were not idolators, as the Jews

represented them to be. But the storm still continuing, and the danger increasing, they put the fate of the lot into execution, and cast Jonah into the sea; where, according to the story, a great fish swallowed him up whole and alive.

We have now to consider Jonah securely housed from the storm in the fish's belly. Here we are told that he prayed; but the prayer is a made-up prayer, taken from various parts of the Psalms, without any connexion or consistency, and adapted to the distress, but not at all to the condition, that Jonah was in. It is such a prayer as a Gentile, who might know something of the Psalms, could copy out for him. This circumstance alone, were there no other, is sufficient to indicate that the whole is a made-up story. The prayer, however, is supposed to have answered the purpose, and the story goes on, (taking up at the same time the cant language of a Bible prophet,) saying, "*The Lord spake unto the fish*, and it vomited out Jonah upon dry land."

Jonah then received a second mission to Ninevah, with which he sets out; and we have now to consider him as a preacher. The distress he is represented to have suffered, the remembrance of his own disobedience as the cause of it, and the miraculous escape he is supposed to have had, were sufficient, one would conceive, to have impressed him with sympathy and benevolence in the execution of his mission; but, instead of this, he enters the city with denunciation and malediction in his mouth, crying, "*Yet forty days, and Ninevah shall be overthrown.*"

We have now to consider this supposed missionary in the last act of his mission; and here it is that the malevolent spirit of a Bible-prophet, or of a predicting priest, appears in all that blackness of character, that men ascribe to the being they call the devil.

Having published his predictions, he withdrew, says the story, to the east side of the city. But for what? not to contemplate, in retirement, the mercy of his Creator to himself, or to others, but to wait with malignant impatience, the destruction of Ninevah. It came to pass, however, as the story relates, that the Ninevites reformed, and that God, according to the Bible phrase, repented him of the evil he had said he would do unto them, and did it not. This, saith the first verse of the last chapter, *displeased Jonah exceedingly and he was very angry.* His obdurate heart would rather that all Ninevah should be destroyed, and every soul, young

and old, perish in its ruins, than that his prediction should not be fulfilled. To expose the character of a prophet still more, a gourd is made to grow up in the night, that promises him an agreeable shelter from the heat of the sun, in the place to which he is retired; and the next morning it dies.

Here the rage of the prophet becomes excessive, and he is ready to destroy himself. "*It is better, said he, for me to die than to live.*" This brings on a supposed expostulation between the Almighty and the prophet; in which the former says, "*Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And Jonah said, I do well to be angry even unto death; Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it to grow, which came up in a night, and perished in a night; and should not I spare Ninevah, that great city, in which are more than threescore thousand persons, that cannot discern between their right hand and their left?*"

Here is both the winding up of the satire, and the moral of the fable. As a satire, it strikes against the character of all the Bible-prophets, and against all the indiscriminate judgments upon men, women, and children, with which this lying book, the Bible, is crowded; such as Noah's flood, the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the extirpation of the Canaanites, even to sucking infants, and women with child, because the same reflection, *that there are more than threescore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left*, meaning young children, applies to all their cases. It satirizes also the supposed partiality of the Creator, for one nation more than for another.

As a moral, it preaches against the malevolent spirit of prediction; for as certainly as a man predicts ill, he becomes inclined to wish it. The pride of having his judgment right, hardens his heart, till at last he beholds with satisfaction, or sees with disappointment, the accomplishment or the failure of his predictions. This book ends with the same kind of strong and well-directed point against prophets, prophecies, and indiscriminate judgments, as the chapter that Benjamin Franklin made for the Bible, about Abraham and the stranger, ends against the intolerant spirit of religious persecution. Thus much for the book Jonah.

Of the poetical parts of the Bible, that are called prophecies, I have spoken in the former part of the *Age of Reason*, and already in this: where I have said that the word *prophet* is the Bible word

for *poet;* and that the flights and metaphors of those poets, many of which have become obscure by the lapse of time and the change of circumstances, have been ridiculously erected into things called prophecies, and applied to purposes the writers never thought of. When a priest quotes any of those passages, he unriddles it agreeably to his own views, and imposes that explanation upon his congregation as the meaning of the writer. The *whore of Babylon* has been the common whore of all the priests, and each has accused the other of keeping the strumpet; so well do they agree in their explanations.

There now remain only a few books, which they call the books of the lesser prophets; and as I have already shown that the greater are impostors, it would be cowardice to disturb the repose of the little ones. Let them sleep, then, in the arms of their nurses, the priests, and both be forgotten together.

I have now gone through the Bible, as a man would go through a wood with an axe on his shoulder, and fell trees. Here they lie; and the priests, if they can, may replant them. They may, perhaps, stick them in the ground, but they will never make them grow.—I pass on to the books of the New Testament.

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

The New Testament, they tell us, is founded upon the prophecies of the Old; if so, it must follow the fate of its foundation.

As it is nothing extraordinary that a woman should be with child before she was married, and that the son she might bring forth should be executed, even unjustly, I see no reason for not believing that such a woman as Mary, and such a man as Joseph, and Jesus, existed; their mere existence is a matter of indifference, about which there is no ground either to believe or to disbelieve, and which comes under the common head of, *It may be so; and what then?* The probability, however, is, that there were such persons, or at least such as resembled them in part of the circumstances, because almost all romantic stories have been suggested by some actual circumstance; as the adventures of Robinson Crusoe, not a word of which is true, were suggested by the case of Alexander Selkirk.

It is not then the existence, or non-existence, of the persons that I trouble myself about; it is the fable of Jesus Christ, as told in the New Testament, and the wild and visionary doctrine raised thereon against which I contend. The story, taking it as it is told, is blasphemously obscene. It gives an account of a young woman engaged to be married, and while under this engagement, she is, to speak plain language, debauched by a ghost, under the impious pretence, (Luke, chap. i. ver. 35,) that "*the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee.*" Notwithstanding which, Joseph afterwards marries her, cohabits with her as his wife, and in his turn rivals the ghost. This is putting the story into intelligible language, and when told in this manner, there is not a priest but must be ashamed to own it.*

Obscenity in matters of faith, however wrapped up, is always a token of fable and imposture; for it is necessary to our serious belief in God, that we do not connect it with stories that run, as this does, into ludicrous interpretations. This story is, upon the face of it, the same kind of story as that of Jupiter and Leda, or Jupiter and Europa, or any of the amorous adventures of Jupiter; and shows, as is already stated in the former part of the *Age of Reason*, that the Christian faith is built upon the heathen mythology.

As the historical parts of the New Testament, so far as concerns Jesus Christ, are confined to a very short space of time, less than two years, and all within the same country, and nearly to the same spot, the discordance of time, place, and circumstance, which detects the fallacy of the books of the Old Testament, and proves them to be impositions, cannot be expected to be found here in the same abundance. The New Testament compared with the Old, is like a farce of one act, in which there is not room for very numerous violations of the unities. There are, however, some glaring contradictions, which, exclusive of the fallacy of the pretended prophecies, are sufficient to show the story of Jesus Christ to be false.

I lay it down as a position which cannot be controverted, first, that the *agreement* of all the parts of a story does not prove that

* Mary, the supposed virgin mother of Jesus, had several other children, sons and daughters. See Matt. chap. xiii. 55, 56.

story to be true, because the parts may agree, and the whole may be false; secondly, that the *disagreement* of the parts of a story proves *the whole cannot be true*. The agreement does not prove truth, but the disagreement proves falsehood positively

The history of Jesus Christ is contained in the four books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The first chapter of Matthew begins with giving a genealogy of Jesus Christ; and in the third chapter of Luke, there is also given a genealogy of Jesus Christ. Did these two agree, it would not prove the genealogy to be true, because it might, nevertheless, be a fabrication; but as they contradict each other in every particular, it proves falsehood absolutely. If Matthew speaks truth, Luke speaks falsehood; and if Luke speaks truth, Matthew speaks falsehood; and as there is no authority for believing one more than the other, there is no authority for believing either; and if they cannot be believed even in the very first thing they say, and set out to prove, they are not entitled to be believed in any thing they say afterwards. Truth is an uniform thing; and as to inspiration and revelation, were we to admit it, it is impossible to suppose it can be contradictory. Either then the men called apostles were imposters, or the books ascribed to them have been written by other persons, and fathered upon them, as is the case in the Old Testament.

The book of Matthew gives, chap. i. ver. 6, a genealogy by name from David, up through Joseph, the husband of Mary, to Christ: and makes there to be *twenty-eight* generations. The book of Luke gives also a genealogy by name from Christ, through Joseph, the husband of Mary, down to David, and makes there to be *forty-three* generations; besides which, there are only the two names of David and Joseph that are alike in the two lists. I here insert both genealogical lists, and for the sake of perspicuity and comparison have placed them both in the same direction, that is, from Joseph down to David.

Genealogy, according to Matthew.	Genealogy, according to Luke.
Christ	Christ
2 Joseph	2 Joseph
3 Jacob	3 Heli
4 Matthan	4 Matthat
5 Eleazer	5 Levi

Genealogy, acording to Matthew.	Genealogy, according to Luke.
6 Eliud	6 Melchi
7 Achim	7 Janna
8 Sadoc	8 Joseph
9 Azor	9 Mattathias
10 Eliakim	10 Amos
11 Abiud	11 Naum
12 Zorobabel	12 Esli
13 Salathiel	13 Nagge
14 Jechonias	14 Maath
15 Josias	15 Mattathias
16 Amon	16 Semei
17 Manasses	17 Joseph
18 Ezekias	18 Juda
19 Achaz	19 Joanna
20 Joatham	20 Rhesa
21 Ozias	21 Zorobabel
22 Joram	22 Salathiel
23 Josaphat	23 Neri
24 Asa	24 Melchi
25 Abia	25 Addi
26 Roboam	26 Cosam
27 Solomon	27 Elmodam
28 David*	28 Er
	29 Jose
	30 Eliezer
	31 Jorim
	32 Matthat
	33 Levi
	34 Simeon
	35 Juda

* From the birth of David to the birth of Christ is upwards of 1080 years, and as the life-time of Christ is not included, there are but 27 full generations. To find, therefore, the average age of each person mentioned in the list, at the time his first son was born, it is only necessary to divide 108 by 27, which gives 40 years for each person. As the life-time of man was then but of the same extent it is now, it is an absurdity to suppose, that 27 following generations should all be old bachelors, before they married; and the more so, when we are told that Solomon, the next in succession to David, had a house full of wives and mistresses before he was twenty-one years of age. So far from this genealogy being a solemn truth, it is not even a reasonable lie. The list of Luke gives about twenty-six years for the average age, and this is too much.

Genealogy, according to Matthew.	Genealogy, according to Luke.
	36 Joseph
	37 Jonan
	38 Elakim
	39 Melea
	40 Menan
	41 Mattatha
	42 Nathan
	43 David

Now, if these men, Matthew and Luke, set out with a falsehood between them (as these two accounts show they do) in the very commencement of their history of Jesus Christ, and of whom, and of what he was, what authority (as I have before asked) is there left for believing the strange things they tell us afterwards? If they cannot be believed in their account of his natural genealogy, how are we to believe them, when they tell us, he was the son of God, begotten by a ghost; and that an angel announced this in secret to his mother? If they lied in one genealogy, why are we to believe them in the other? If his natural be manufactured, which it certainly is, why are not we to suppose, that his celestial genealogy is manufactured also; and that the whole is fabulous? Can any man of serious reflection hazard his future happiness upon the belief of a story naturally impossible; repugnant to every idea of decency; and related by persons already detected of falsehood? Is it not more safe that we stop ourselves at the plain, pure, and unmixed belief of one God, which is deism, than that we commit ourselves on an ocean of improbable, irrational, indecent and contradictory tales?

The first question, however, upon the books of the New Testament, as upon those of the Old, is, are they genuine? Were they written by the persons to whom they are ascribed? for it is upon this ground only, that the strange things related therein have been credited. Upon this point, there is no *direct proof for or against*; and all that this state of a case proves, is *doubtfulness*; and doubtfulness is the opposite of belief. The state, therefore, that the books are in, proves against themselves, as far as this kind of proof can go.

But, exclusive of this, the presumption is, that the books called the Evangelists, and ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,

were not written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; and that they are impositions. The disordered state of the history in these four books, the silence of one book upon matters related in the other, and the disagreement that is to be found among them, implies, that they are the production of some unconnected individuals, many years after the things they pretend to relate, each of whom made his own legend; and not the writings of men living intimately together, as the men called apostles are supposed to have done: in fine, that they have been manufactured, as the books of the Old Testament have been, by other persons than those whose names they bear.

The story of the angel announcing, what the church calls, the *immaculate conception*, is not so much as mentioned in the books ascribed to Mark and John; and is differently related in Matthew and Luke. The former says, the angel appeared to Joseph; the latter says, it was to Mary; but either, Joseph or Mary, was the worst evidence that could have been thought of; for it was others that should have testified *for them*, and not they for themselves. Were any girl that is now with child to say, and even to swear it, that she was gotten with child by a ghost, and that an angel told her so, would she be believed? Certainly she would not. Why then are we to believe the same thing of another girl whom we never saw, told by nobody knows who, nor when, nor where? How strange and inconsistent is it, that the same circumstance that would weaken the belief even of a probable story, should be given as a motive for believing this one, that has upon the face of it every token of absolute impossibility and imposture.

The story of Herod destroying all the children under two years old, belongs altogether to the book of Matthew: not one of the rest mentions any thing about it. Had such a circumstance been true, the universality of it must have made it known to all the writers; and the thing would have been too striking to have been omitted by any. This writer tells us, that Jesus escaped this slaughter, because Joseph and Mary were warned by an angel to flee with him into Egypt; but he forgot to make any provision for John who was then under two years of age. John, however, who staid behind, fared as well as Jesus, who fled; and, therefore, the story circumstantially belies itself.

Not any two of these writers agree in reciting, *exactly in the same words*, the written inscription, short as it is, which they tell

us was put over Christ when he was crucified: and besides this, Mark says, He was crucified at the third hour, (nine in the morning;) and John says it was the sixth hour, (twelve at noon.*)

The inscription is thus stated in those books.

Matthew—This is Jesus the king of the Jews.
Mark ——The king of the Jews.
Luke ——This is the king of the Jews.
John ——Jesus of Nazareth king of the Jews.

We may infer from these circumstances, trivial as they are, that those writers, whoever they were, and in whatever time they lived, were not present at the scene. The only one of the men, called apostles, who appears to have been near the spot, was Peter, and when he was accused of being one of Jesus' followers, it is said, (Matthew, chap. xxvi. ver. 74,) "*Then Peter began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man:*" yet we are now called upon to believe the same Peter, convicted, by their own account, of perjury. For what reason, or on what authority, shall we do this?

The accounts that are given of the circumstances, that they tell us attended the crucifixion, are differently related in those four books.

The book ascribed to Matthew says, "*There was darkness over all the land from the sixth hour unto the ninth hour—that the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom—that there was an earthquake—that the rocks rent—that the graves opened, that the bodies of many of the saints that slept arose and came out of their graves after the resurrection, and went into the holy city and appeared unto many.*" Such is the account which this dashing writer of the book of Matthew gives; but in which he is not supported by the writers of the other books.

The writer of the book ascribed to Mark, in detailing the circumstances of the crucifixion, makes no mention of any earthquake, nor of the rocks rending, nor of the graves opening, nor of the dead men walking out. The writer of the book of Luke is silent also upon the same points. And as to the writer of the book of John, though he details all the circumstances of the cruci-

* According to John, the sentence was not passed till about the sixth hour, (noon,) and, consequently, the execution could not be till the afternoon; but Mark says expressly, that he was crucified at the third hour, (nine in the morning,) chap. xv. 25; John chap. xix. ver. 14.

fixion down to the burial of Christ, he says nothing about either the darkness—the veil of the temple—the earthquake—the rocks—the graves—nor the dead men.

Now if it had been true, that those things had happened; and if the writers of these books had lived at the time they did happen, and had been the persons they are said to be, namely, the four men called apostles, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, it was not possible for them, as true historians, even without the aid of inspiration, not to have recorded them. The things, supposing them to have been facts, were of too much notoriety not to have been known, and of too much importance not to have been told. All these supposed apostles must have been witnesses of the earthquake, if there had been any; for it was not possible for them to have been absent from it; the opening of the graves and resurrection of the dead men, and their walking about the city is of greater importance than the earthquake. An earthquake is always possible, and natural, and proves nothing; but this opening of the graves is supernatural, and directly in point to their doctrine, their cause, and their apostleship. Had it been true, it would have filled up whole chapters of those books, and been the chosen theme and general chorus of all the writers; but instead of this, little and trivial things, and mere prattling conversations of, *he said this*, and *she said that*, are often tediously detailed, while this most important of all, had it been true, is passed off in a slovenly manner by a single dash of the pen, and that by one writer only, and not so much as hinted at by the rest.

It is an easy thing to tell a lie, but it is difficult to support the lie after it is told. The writer of the book of Matthew should have told us who the saints were that came to life again, and went into the city, and what became of them afterwards, and who it was that saw them; for he is not hardy enough to say he saw them himself; whether they came out naked, and all in natural buff, he-saints and she-saints; or whether they came full dressed, and where they got their dresses; whether they went to their former habitations, and reclaimed their wives, their husbands, and their property, and how they were received; whether they entered ejectments for the recovery of their possessions, or brought actions of *crim. con.* against the rival interlopers; whether they remained on earth, and followed their former occupation of preaching or

working; or whether they died again, or went back to their graves alive, and buried themselves.

Strange indeed, that an army of saints should return to life, and nobody know who they were, nor who it was that saw them, and that not a word more should be said upon the subject, nor these saints have any thing to tell us! Had it been the prophets who (as we are told) had formerly prophesied of these things, *they* must have had a *great deal* to say. They could have told us every thing, and we should have had posthumous prophecies, with notes and commentaries upon the first, a little better at least than we have now. Had it been Moses, and Aaron, and Joshua, and Samuel, and David, not an unconverted Jew had remained in all Jerusalem. Had it been John the Baptist, and the saints of the time then present, every body would have known them, and they would have out-preached and out-famed all the other apostles. But, instead of this, these saints are made to pop up, like Jonah's gourd in the night, for no purpose at all but to wither in the morning. Thus much for this part of the story.

The tale of the resurrection follows that of the crucifixion; and in this as well as in that, the writers, whoever they were, disagree so much, as to make it evident that none of them were there.

The book of Matthew states, that when Christ was put in the sepulchre, the Jews applied to Pilate for a watch or a guard to be placed over the sepulchre, to prevent the body being stolen by the disciples; and that, in consequence of this request, the sepulchre *was made sure, sealing the stone* that covered the mouth, and setting a watch. But the other books say nothing about this application, nor about the sealing, nor the guard, nor the watch; and according to their accounts, there were none. Matthew, however, follows up this part of the story of the guard or the watch with a second part, that I shall notice in the conclusion, as it serves to detect the fallacy of those books.

The book of Matthew continues its account, and says, (chap. xxviii. ver. 1,) that at the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn, towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre. Mark says it was sun-rising, and John says it was dark. Luke says it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women, that came to the sepulchre; and John states, that Mary Magdalene came alone. So well do they agree about their first evi-

dence! they all, however, appear to have known most about Mary Magdalene; she was a woman of a large acquaintance, and it was not an ill conjecture that she might be upon the stroll.

The book of Matthew goes on to say, (ver. 2,) "And behold there was a great earthquake, for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it." But the other books say nothing about any earthquake, nor about the angel rolling back the stone, and sitting upon it; and, according to their account, there was no angel sitting there. Mark says the angel was *within* the sepulchre, sitting on the right side. Luke says there were two, and they were both standing up; and John says they were both sitting down, one at the head and the other at the feet.

Matthew says, that the angel that was sitting upon the stone on the outside of the sepulchre, told the two Marys that Christ was risen, and that the women went away quickly. Mark says, that the women, upon seeing the stone rolled away, and wondering at it, went into the sepulchre, and that it was the angel that was sitting within on the right side, that told them so. Luke says, it was the two angels that were standing up; and John says, it was Jesus Christ himself that told it to Mary Magdalene; and that she did not go into the sepulchre, but only stooped down and looked in.

Now, if the writers of these four books had gone into a court of Justice to prove an *alibi*, (for it is of the nature of an alibi that is here attempted to be proved, namely, the absence of a dead body by supernatural means,) and had they given their evidence in the same contradictory manner as it is here given, they would have been in danger of having their ears cropt for perjury, and would have justly deserved it. Yet this is the evidence, and these are the books, that have been imposed upon the world, as being given by divine inspiration, and as the unchangeable word of God.

The writer of the book of Matthew, after giving this account, relates a story that is not to be found in any of the other books, and which is the same I have just before alluded to.

"Now," says he, (that is, after the conversation the women had had with the angel sitting upon the stone,) "behold some of the watch (meaning the watch that he had said had been placed over the sepulchre) came into the city, and showed unto the chief

priests all the things that were done ; and when they were assembled with the elders and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, that his disciples came by night, and stole him away while we *slept;* and if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught ; and this saying (that his disciples stole him away) is commonly reported among the Jews until this day."

The expression, *until this day*, is an evidence that the book ascribed to Matthew was not written by Matthew, and that it has been manufactured long after the times and things of which it pretends to treat ; for the expression implies a great length of intervening time. It would be inconsistent in us to speak in this manner of any thing happening in our own time. To give, therefore, intelligible meaning to the expression, we must suppose a lapse of some generations at least, for this manner of speaking carries the mind back to ancient time.

The absurdity also of the story is worth noticing ; for it shows the writer of the book of Matthew to have been an exceedingly weak and foolish man. He tells a story that contradicts itself in point of possibility ; for though the guard, if there were any, might be made to say that the body was taken away while they were *asleep*, and to give that as a reason for their not having prevented it, that same sleep must also have prevented their knowing how, and by whom it was done ; and yet they are made to say, that it was the disciples who did it. Were a man to tender his evidence of something that he should say was done, and of the manner of doing it, and of the person who did it while he was asleep, and could know nothing of the matter, such evidence could not be received ; it will do well enough for Testament evidence, but not for any thing where truth is concerned.

I come now to that part of the evidence in those books, that respects the pretended appearance of Christ after this pretended resurrection.

The writer of the book of Matthew relates, that the angel that was sitting on the stone at the mouth of the sepulchre, said to the two Marys, chap. xxviii. ver. 7, " *Behold Christ is gone before you into Galilee, there ye shall see him ; lo, I have told you.*" And the same writer at the two next verses, (8, 9,) makes Christ himself to speak to the same purpose to these women immediately

after the angel had told it to them, and that they ran quickly to tell it to the disciples ; and at the 16th verse it is said, "*Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee*, into a mountain were Jesus had appointed them : and, when they saw him, they worshipped him."

But the writer of the book of John tells us a story very different to this ; for he says, chap. xx. ver. 19, "*Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week*, (that is, the same day that Christ is said to have risen,) *when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst of them.*

According to Matthew the eleven were marching to Galilee, to meet Jesus in a mountain, by his own appointment, at the very time when, according to John, they were assembled in another place, and that not by appointment but in secret, for fear of the Jews.

The writer of the book of Luke contradicts that of Matthew more pointedly than John does ; for he says expressly, that the meeting was in *Jerusalem* the evening of the same day that he (Christ) rose, and that the *eleven* were *there*. See Luke, chap. xxiv. ver. 13, 33.

Now, it is not possible, unless we admit these supposed disciples the right of wilful lying, that the writer of these books could be any of the eleven persons called disciples : for if, according to Matthew, the eleven went into Galilee to meet Jesus in a mountain by his own appointment, on the same day that he is said to have risen, Luke and John must have been two of that eleven ; yet the writer of Luke says expressly, and John implies as much, that the meeting was that same day, in a house in Jerusalem ; and, on the other hand, if, according to Luke and John, the *eleven* were assembled in a house in Jerusalem, Matthew must have been one of that eleven ; yet Matthew says, the meeting was in a mountain in Galilee, and consequently the evidence given in those books destroys each other.

The writer of the book of Mark says nothing about any meeting in Galilee ; but he says, chap. xvi. ver. 12, that Christ, after his resurrection, appeared in another form to two of them, as they walked into the country, and that these two told it to the residue who would not believe them. Luke also tells a story, in which he keeps Christ employed the whole of the day of this pretended resurrection, until the evening, and which totally invalidates the

account of going to the mountain in Galilee. He says, that two of them, without saying which two, went that same day to a village called Emmaus, threescore furlongs (seven miles and a half) from Jerusalem, and that Christ, in disguise, went with them, and staid with them unto the evening, and supped with them, and then vanished out of their sight, and re-appeared that same evening, at the meeting of the eleven in Jerusalem.

This is the contradictory manner in which the evidence of this pretended re-appearance of Christ is stated; the only point in which the writers agree, is the skulking privacy of that re-appearance; for whether it was in the recess of a mountain in Galilee, or in a shut-up house in Jerusalem, it was still skulking. To what cause then are we to assign this skulking? On the one hand, it is directly repugnant to the supposed or pretended end—that of convincing the world that Christ was risen; and, on the other hand, to have asserted the publicity of it, would have exposed the writers of those books to public detection, and, therefore, they have been under the necessity of making it a private affair.

As to the account of Christ being seen by more than five hundred at once, it is Paul only who says it, and not the five hundred who say it for themselves. It is, therefore, the testimony of but one man, and that too of a man, who did not, according to the same account, believe a word of the matter himself, at the time it is said to have happened. His evidence, supposing him to have been the writer of the 15th chapter of Corinthians, where this account is given, is like that of a man who comes into a court of justice to swear, that what he had sworn before is false. A man may often see reason, and he has, too, always the right of changing his opinion; but this liberty does not extend to matters of fact.

I now come to the last scene, that of the ascension into heaven. Here all fear of the Jews, and of every thing else, must necessarily have been out of the question: it was that which, if true, was to seal the whole; and upon which the reality of the future mission of the disciples was to rest for proof. Words, whether declarations or promises, that passed in private, either in the recess of a mountain in Galilee, or in a shut-up house in Jerusalem, even supposing them to have been spoken, could not be evidence in public; it was therefore necessary that this last scene should preclude the possibility of denial and dispute; and that it should

be, as I have stated in the former part of the *Age of Reason*, as public and as visible as the sun at noon day: at least it ought to have been as public as the crucifixion is reported to have been. But to come to the point.

In the first place the writer of the book of Matthew does not say a syllable about it; neither does the writer of the book of John. This being the case, is it possible to suppose that those writers, who affect to be even minute in other matters, would have been silent upon this, had it been true? The writer of the book of Mark passes it off in a careless, slovenly manner, with a single dash of the pen, as if he was tired of romancing, or ashamed of the story. So also does the writer of Luke. And even between these two, there is not an apparent agreement, as to the place where this final parting is said to have been.

The book of Mark says, that Christ appeared to the eleven as they sat at meat; alluding to the meeting of the eleven at Jerusalem: he then states the conversation that he says passed at that meeting; and immediately after says, (as a school-boy would finish a dull story,) "*So then*, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." But the writer of Luke says, that the ascension was from Bethany; that *he* (Christ) *led them out as far as Bethany, and was parted from them there, and was carried up into heaven.* So also was Mahomet: and, as to Moses, the *apostle* Jude says, ver. 9, *That Michael and the devil disputed about his body.* While we believe such fables as these, or either of them, we believe unworthily of the Almighty.

I have now gone through the examination of the four books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; and when it is considered that the whole space of time from the crucifixion to what is called the ascension, is but a few days, apparently not more than three or four, and that all the circumstances are said to have happened nearly about the same spot, Jerusalem; it is, I believe, impossible to find, in any story upon record, so many and such glaring absurdities, contradictions, and falsehoods, as are in those books. They are more numerous and striking than I had any expectation of finding, when I began this examination, and far more so than I had any idea of when I wrote the former part of the *Age of Reason*. I had then neither Bible nor Testament to refer to, nor could I procure any. My own situation, even as to

existence, was becoming every day more precarious ; and as I was willing to leave something behind me upon the subject, I was obliged to be quick and concise. The quotations I then made were from memory only, but they are correct ; and the opinions I have advanced in that work are the effect of the most clear and long-established conviction—that the Bible and the Testament are impositions upon the world—that the fall of man—the account of Jesus Christ being the Son of God, and of his dying to appease the wrath of God, and of salvation by that strange means, are all fabulous inventions, dishonourable to the wisdom and power of the Almighty—that the only true religon is Deism, by which I then meant, and now mean, the belief of one God, and an imitation of his moral character, or the practice of what are called moral virtues—and that it was upon this only (so far as religion is concerned) that I rested all my hopes of happiness hereafter. So say I now—and so help me God.

But to return to the subject.—Though it is impossible, at this distance of time, to ascertain as a fact who were the writers of those four books (and this alone is sufficient to hold them in doubt, and where we doubt we do not believe) it is not difficult to ascertain negatively that they were not written by the persons to whom they are ascribed. The contradictions in those books demonstrate two things :

First, that the writers cannot have been eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of the matters they relate, or they would have related them without those contradictions ; and, consequently, that the books have not been written by the persons called apostles, who are supposed to have been witnesses of this kind.

Secondly, that the writers, whoever they were, have not acted in concerted imposition, but each writer separately and individually for himself, and without the knowledge of the other.

The same evidence that applies to prove the one, applies equally to prove both cases ; that is, that the books were not written by the men called apostles, and also that they are not a concerted imposition. As to inspiration, it is altogether out of the question ; we may as well attempt to unite truth and falsehood, as inspiration and contradiction.

If four men are eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses to a scene, they will, without any concert between them, agree as to time and place, when and where that scene happened. Their individual

knowledge of the *thing*, each one knowing it for himself, renders concert totally unnecessary; the one will not say it was in a mountain in the country, and the other at a house in town: the one will not say it was at sun-rise, and the other that it was dark. For in whatever place it was, at whatever time it was, they know it equally alike.

And, on the other hand, if four men concert a story, they will make their separate relations of that story agree, and corroborate with each other to support the whole. *That* concert supplies the want of fact in the one case, as the knowledge of the fact supercedes, in the other case, the necessity of a concert. The same contradictions, therefore, that prove there has been no concert, prove, also, that the reporters had no knowledge of the fact, (or rather of that which they relate as a fact,) and detect also the falsehood of their reports. Those books, therefore, have neither been written by the men called apostles, nor by impostors in concert. How then have they been written?

I am not one of those who are fond of believing there is much of that which is called wilful lying, or lying originally; except in the case of men setting up to be prophets, as in the Old Testament: for prophesying is lying professionally. In almost all other cases, it is not difficult to discover the progress, by which even simple supposition, with the aid of credulity, will, in time, grow into a lie, and at last be told as a fact; and whenever we can find a charitable reason for a thing of this kind, we ought not to indulge a severe one.

The story of Jesus Christ appearing after he was dead, is the story of an apparition, such as timid imaginations can always create in vision, and credulity believe. Stories of this kind had been told of the assassination of Julius Cæsar, not many years before, and they generally have their origin in violent deaths, or in the execution of innocent persons. In cases of this kind, compassion lends its aid, and benevolently stretches the story. It goes on a little and a little further, till it becomes a *most certain truth*. Once start a ghost, and credulity fills up the history of its life, and assigns the cause of its appearance! one tells it one way, another another way, till there are as many stories about the ghost and about the proprietor of the ghost, as there are about Jesus Christ in these four books.

The story of the appearance of Jesus Christ is told with that strange mixture of the natural and impossible, that distinguishes legendary tale from fact. He is represented as suddenly coming in and going out when the doors are shut, and of vanishing out of sight, and appearing again, as one would conceive of an unsubstantial vision; then again he is hungry, sits down to meat, and eats his supper. But as those who tell stories of this kind, never provide for all the cases, so it is here: they have told us, that when he arose he left his grave clothes behind him; but they have forgotten to provide other clothes for him to appear in afterwards, or tell to us what he did with them when he ascended; whether he stripped all off, or went up clothes and all. In the case of Elijah, they have been careful enough to make him throw down his mantle; how it happened not to be burnt in the chariot of fire, they also have not told us. But as imagination supplies all deficiencies of this kind, we may suppose if we please, that it was made of salamander's wool.

Those who are not much acquainted with ecclesiastical history, may suppose that the book called the New Testament has existed ever since the time of Jesus Christ, as they suppose that the books ascribed to Moses have existed ever since the time of Moses. But the fact is historically otherwise; there was no such book as the New Testament till more than three hundred years after the time that Christ is said to have lived.

At what time the books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, began to appear, is altogether a matter of uncertainty. There is not the least shadow of evidence of who the persons were that wrote them, nor at what time they were written; and they might as well have been called by the names of any of the other supposed apostles, as by the names they are now called. The originals are not in the possession of any Christian Church existing, any more than the two tables of stone written on, they pretend, by the finger of God, upon mount Sinai, and given to Moses, are in the possession of the Jews. And even if they were, there is no possibility of proving the hand writing in either case. At the time those books were written there was no printing, and consequently there could be no publication, otherwise than by written copies, which any man might make or alter at pleasure, and call them originals. Can we suppose it is consistent with the wisdom of the Almighty, to commit himself and his will to man, upon such pre-

carious means as these, or that it is consistent we should pin our faith upon such uncertainties? We cannot make nor alter, nor even imitate so much as one blade of grass that he has made, and yet we can make or alter *words of God* as easily as words of man.*

About three hundred and fifty years after the time that Christ is said to have lived, several writings of the kind I am speaking of, were scattered in the hands of divers individuals; and as the church had begun to form itself into an hierarchy, or church government, with temporal powers, it set itself about collecting them into a code, as we now see them, called *The New Testament.* They decided by vote, as I have before said in the former part of the *Age of Reason*, which of those writings, out of the collection they had made, should be the *word of God*, and which should not. The Rabbins of the Jews had decided, by vote, upon the books of the Bible before.

As the object of the church, as is the case in all national establishments of churches, was power and revenue, and terror the means it used: it is consistent to suppose, that the most miraculous and wonderful of the writings they had collected stood the best chance of being voted. And as to the authenticity of the books, the *vote stands in the place of it;* for it can be traced no higher.

Disputes, however, ran high among the people then calling themselves Christians; not only as to points of doctrine, but as to the authenticity of the books. In the contest between the persons called St. Augustine and Fauste, about the year 400, the latter says, "The books called the Evangelists have been composed long after the times of the apostles, by some obscure men, who, fearing that the world would not give credit to their relation of matters of which they could not be informed, have published them under the names of the apostles; and which are so full of

* The former part of the *Age of Reason* has not been published two years, and there is already an expession in it that is not mine. The expression is: *The book of Luke was carried by a majority of one voice only.* It may be true, but it is not I that have said it. Some person who might know the circumstance, has added it in a note at the bottom of the page of some of the editions, printed either in England or in America; and the printers, after that, have erected it into the body of the work, and made me the author of it. If this has happened within such a short space of time, notwithstanding the aid of printing, which prevents the alteration of copies individually; what may not have happened in much greater length of time, when there was no printing, and when any man who could write could make a written copy, and call it an original, by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

sottishness and discordant relations, that there is neither agreement nor connexion between them."

And in another place, addressing himself to the advocates of those books, as being the word of God, he says, "It is thus that your predecessors have inserted in the scriptures of our Lord, many things, which though they carry his name, agree not with his doctrines. This is not surprising, *since that we have often proved* that these things have not been written by himself, nor by his apostles, but that for the greatest part they are founded upon *tales*, upon *vague reports*, and put together by I know not what, half Jews, with but little agreement between them; and which they have nevertheless published under the names of the Apostles of our Lord, and have thus attributed to them their own *errors and their lies.*"*

The reader will see by these extracts, that the authenticity of the books of the New Testament was denied, and the books treated as tales, forgeries, and lies, at the time they were voted to be the word of God. But the interest of the church, with the assistance of the faggot, bore down the opposition, and at last suppressed all investigation. Miracles followed upon miracles, if we will believe them, and men were taught to say they believed whether they believed or not. But (by way of throwing in a thought) the French Revolution has excommunicated the church from the power of working miracles: she has not been able, with the assistance of all her saints, to work *one* miracle since the revolution began; and as she never stood in greater need than now, we may, without the aid of devination, conclude, that all her former miracles were tricks, and lies.†

* I have taken these two extracts from Boulanger's Life of Paul, written in French; Boulanger has quoted them from the writings of Augustine against Fauste, to which he refers.

† Boulanger in his Life of Paul, has collected from the ecclesiastical histories, and the writings of the fathers as they are called, several matters which show the opinions that prevailed among the different sects of Christians, at the time the Testament, as we now see it, was voted to be the word of God. The following extracts are from the second chapter of that work.

"The Marchionists, (a Christian sect,) assured that the evangelists were filled with falsities. The Manicheens, who formed a very numerous sect at the commencement of Christianity, *rejected as false, all the New Testament;* and showed other writings quite different that they gave for authentic. The Corinthians, like the Marcionists, admitted not the Acts of the Apostles. The Encratites, and the Sevenians, adopted neither the acts nor the Epistles of Paul. Chrysostome, in a homily which he made upon the Acts of the Apostles, says, that in his time, about the year 400, many people knew nothing either of the

When we consider the lapse of more than three hundred years intervening between the time that Christ is said to have lived and the time the new Testament was formed into a book, we must see, even without the assistance of historical evidence, the exceeding uncertainty there is of its authenticity. The authenticity of the book of Homer, so far as regards the authorship, is much better established than that of the New Testament, though Homer is a thousand years the most ancient. It was only an exceeding good poet that could have written the book of Homer, and, therefore, few men only could have attempted it; and a man capable of doing it would not have thrown away his own fame by giving it to another. In like manner, there were but few that could have composed Euclid's Elements, because none but an exceeding good geometrician could have been the author of that work.

But with respect to the books of the New Testament, particularly such parts as tell us of the resurrection and ascension of Christ, any person who could tell a story of an apparition, or of a *man's walking*, could have made such books; for the story is most wretchedly told. The chance, therefore, of forgery in the Testament, is millions to one greater than in the case of Homer or Euclid. Of the numerous priests or parsons of the present day, bishops and all, every one of them can make a sermon, or translate a scrap of Latin, especially if it has been translated a thousand times before; but is there any amongst them that can write poetry like Homer, of science like Euclid; the sum total of a parson's learning, with very few exceptions, is *a b ab*, and *hic, hæc, hoc;* and their knowledge of science is three times one is three; and this is more than sufficient to have enabled them, had they lived at the time, to have written all the books of the New Testament.

As the opportunities of forgery were greater, so also was the inducement. A man could gain no advantage by writing under the name of Homer or Euclid; if he could write equal to them, it

author or of the book. St. Irene, who lived before that time, reports that the Valentinians, like several other sects of the Christians, accused the Scriptures of being filled with imperfections, errors and contradictions. The Ebionites or Nazareens, who were the first Christians, rejected all the Epistles of Paul, and regarded him as an impostor. They report among other things, that he was originally a Pagan, that he came to Jerusalem, where he lived some time; and that having a mind to marry the daughter of the high priest, he caused himself to be circumcised; but that not being able to obtain her, he quarrelled with the Jews, and wrote against circumcision, and against the observation of the sabbath, and against all the legal ordinances."

would be better that he wrote under his own name ; if inferior, he could not succeed. Pride would prevent the former, and impossibility the latter. But with respect to such books as compose the New Testament, all the inducements were on the side of forgery. The best immagined history that could have been made, at the distance of two or three hundred years after the time, could not have passed for an original under the name of the real writer ; the only chance of success lay in forgery, for the church wanted pretence for its new doctrine, and truth and talents were out of the question.

But as it is not uncommon (as before observed) to relate stories of persons *walking* after they are dead, and of ghosts and apparitions of such as have fallen by some violent or extraordinary means ; and as the people of that day were in the habit of believing such things, and of the appearance of angels, and also of devils, and of their getting into people's insides, and shaking them like a fit of an ague, and of their being cast out again as if by an emetic—(Mary Magdalene, the book of Mark tells us, had brought up, or been brought to bed of seven devils;) it was nothing extraordinary that some story of this kind should get abroad of the person called Jesus Christ, and become afterwards the foundation of the four books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each writer told the tale as he heard it, or thereabouts, and gave to his book the name of the saint or the apostle whom tradition had given as the eye-witness. It is only upon this ground that the contradictions in those books can be accounted for; and if this be not the case, they are downright impositions, lies, and forgeries, without even the apology of credulity.

That they have been written by a sort of half Jews, as the foregoing quotations mention, is discernable enough. The frequent references made to that chief assassin and impostor Moses, and to the men called prophets, establishes this point; and, on the other hand, the church has complimented the fraud, by admitting the Bible and the Testament to reply to each other. Between the Christian Jew and the Christian Gentile, the thing called a prophecy, and the thing prophesied ; the type and the thing typified ; the sign and the thing signified, have been industriously rummaged up, and fitted together like old locks and pick-lock keys. The story foolishly enough told of Eve and the serpent, and naturally enough as to the enmity between men and serpents, (for the serpent always bites about the *heel*, because it cannot reach

higher; and the man always knocks the serpent about the *head*, as the most effectual way to prevent its biting;*) this foolish story, I say, has been made into a prophecy, a type, and a promise to begin with; and the lying imposition of Isaiah to Ahaz, *That a virgin shalt conceive and bear a son*, as a sign that Ahaz should conquer, when the event was that he was defeated, (as already noticed in the observations on the book of Isaiah,) has been perverted, and made to serve as a winder-up.

Jonah and the whale are also made into a sign or a type. Jonah is Jesus, and the whale is the grave: for it is said, (and they have made Christ to say it of himself,) Matt. chap. xvii. v. 40, "For as Jonah was *three days and three nights* in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be *three days and three nights* in the heart of the earth." But it happens, awkwardly enough, that Christ, according to their own account, was but one day and two nights in the grave; about 36 hours, instead of 72: that is, the Friday night, the Saturday, and the Saturday night; for they say he was up on the Sunday morning by sun-rise, or before. But as this fits quite as well as the *bite* and the *kick* in Genesis, or the *virgin* and her *son* in Isaiah, it will pass in the lump of *orthodox* things. Thus much for the historical part of the Testament and its evidences.

Epistles of Paul—The epistles ascribed to Paul, being fourteen in number, almost fill up the remaining part of the Testament. Whether those epistles were written by the person to whom they are ascribed, is a matter of no great importance, since the writer, whoever he was, attempts to prove his doctrine by argument. He does not pretend to have been witness to any of the scenes told of the resurrection and the ascension; and he declares that he had not believed them.

The story of his being struck to the ground as he was journeying to Damascus, has nothing in it miraculous or extraordinary; he escaped with life, and that is more than many others have done, who have been struck with lightning; and that he should loose his sight for three days, and be unable to eat or drink during that time, is nothing more than is common in such conditions. His companions that were with him appear not to have suffered in the same manner, for they were well enough to lead

* "It shall bruise thy *head*, and thou shalt bruise his *heel*." Genesis, chap. iii. ver. 15.

him the remainder of the journey; neither did they pretend to have seen any vision.

The character of the person called Paul, according to the accounts given of him, has in it a great deal of violence and fanaticism; he had persecuted with as much heat as he preached afterwards; the stroke he had received had changed his thinking, without altering his constitution; and, either as a Jew or a Christian, he was the same zealot. Such men are never good moral evidences of any doctrine they preach. They are always in extremes, as well of actions as of belief.

The doctrine he sets out to prove by argument, is the resurrection of the same body: and he advances this as an evidence of immortality. But so much will men differ in their manner of thinking, and in the conclusions they draw from the same premises, that this doctrine of the resurrection of the same body, so far from being an evidence of immortality, appears to me to furnish an evidence against it; for if I had already died in this body, and am raised again in the same body in which I have died, it is presumptive evidence that I shall die again. That resurrection no more secures me against the repetition of dying, than an ague fit, when past, secures me against another. To believe, therefore, in immortality, I must have a more elevated idea than is contained in the gloomy doctrine of the resurrection.

Besides, as a matter of choice, as well as of hope, I had rather have a better body and a more convenient form than the present. Every animal in the creation excels us in something. The winged insects, without mentioning doves or eagles, can pass over more space and with greater ease, in a few minutes, than man can in an hour. The glide of the smallest fish, in proportion to its bulk, exceeds us in motion, almost beyond comparison, and without weariness. Even the sluggish snail can ascend from the bottom of a dungeon, where a man, by the want of that ability, would perish; and a spider can launch itself from the top, as a playful amusement. The personal powers of man are so limited, and his heavy frame so little constructed to extensive enjoyment, that there is nothing to induce us to wish the opinion of Paul to be true. It is too little for the magnitude of the scene—too mean for the sublimity of the subject.

But all other arguments apart, the *consciousness of existence* is the only conceiveable idea we can have of another life, and the

continuance of that consciousness is immortality. The consciousness of existence, or the knowing that we exist, is not necessarily confined to the same form, nor to the same matter, even in this life.

We have not in all cases the same form, nor in any case the same matter, that composed our bodies twenty or thirty years ago; and yet we are conscious of being the same persons. Even legs and arms, which make up almost half the human frame, are not necessary to the consciousness of existence. These may be lost or taken away, and the full consciousness of existence remain; and were their place supplied by wings, or other appendages, we cannot conceive that it could alter our consciousness of existence. In short, we know not how much, or rather how little, of our composition it is, and how exquisitely fine that little is, that creates in us this consciousness of existence; and all beyond that is like the pulp of a peach, distinct and separate from the vegetative speck in the kernel.

Who can say by what exceeding fine action of fine matter it is that a thought is produced in what we call the mind? and yet that thought when produced, as I now produce the thought I am writing, is capable of becoming immortal, and is the only production of man that has that capacity.

Statues of brass and marble will perish; and statues made in imitation of them are not the same statues, nor the same workmanship, any more than the copy of a picture is the same picture. But print and reprint a thought a thousand times over, and that with materials of any kind—carve it in wood, or engrave it on stone, the thought is eternally and identically the same thought in every case. It has a capacity of unimpaired existence, unaffected by change of matter, and is essentially distinct, and of a nature different from every thing else that we know or can conceive. If then the thing produced has in itself a capacity of being immortal, it is more than a token that the power that produced it, which is the self-same thing as consciousness of existence, can be immortal also; and that is independently of the matter it was first connected with, as the thought is of the printing or writing it first appeared in. The one idea is not more difficult to believe than the other, and we can see that one is true.

That the consciousness of existence is not dependent on the same form or the same matter, is demonstrated to our senses in

the works of the creation, as far as our senses are capable of receiving that demonstration. A very numerous part of the animal creation preaches to us, far better than Paul, the belief of a life hereafter. Their little life resembles an earth and a heaven—a present and a future state: and comprises, if it may be so expressed, immortality in miniature.

The most beautiful parts of the creation to our eye are the winged insects, and they are not so originally. They acquire that form, and that inimitable brilliancy by progressive changes. The slow and creeping caterpillar-worm of to day, passes in a few days to a torpid figure, and a state resembling death; and in the next change comes forth in all the miniature magnificence of life, a splendid butterfly. No resemblance of the former creature remains; every thing is changed; all his powers are new, and life is to him another thing. We cannot conceive that the consciousness of existence is not the same in this state of the animal as before; why then must I believe that the resurrection of the same body is necessary to continue to me the consciousness of existence hereafter.

In the former part of the *Age of Reason*, I have called the creation the only true and real word of God; and this instance, of this text, in the book of creation, not only shows to us that this thing may be so, but that it is so; and that the belief of a future state is a rational belief, founded upon facts visible in the creation: for it is not more difficult to believe that we shall exist hereafter in a better state and form than at present, than that a worm should become a butterfly, and quit the dunghill for the atmosphere, if we did not know it as a fact.

As to the doubtful jargon ascribed to Paul in the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians, which makes part of the burial service of some Christian sectaries, it is as destitute of meaning as the tolling of the bell at the funeral; it explains nothing to the understanding—it illustrates nothing to the imagination, but leaves the reader to find any meaning if he can. "All flesh, (says he,) is not the same flesh. There is one flesh of men; another of beasts; another of fishes; and another of birds." And what then?—nothing. A cook could have said as much. "There are also, (says he,) bodies celestial and bodies terrestial; the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestial is another." And what then?—nothing. And what is the difference? nothing that he has told.

"There is, (says he,) one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars." And what then?—nothing; except that he says that *one star differeth from another star in glory*, instead of distance; and he might as well have told us, that the moon did not shine so bright as the sun. All this is nothing better than the jargon of a conjuror, who picks up phrases he does not understand, to confound the credulous people who come to have their fortunes told. Priests and conjurors are of the same trade.

Sometimes Paul affects to be a naturalist and to prove his system of resurrection from the principles of vegetation. "Thou fool, (says he,) that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." To which one might reply in his own language, and say, Thou fool, Paul, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die not; for the grain that dies in the ground never does, nor can vegetate. It is only the living grains that produce the next crop. But the metaphor, in any point of view, is no simile. It is succession, and not resurrection.

The progress of an animal from one state of being to another, as from a worm to a butterfly, applies to the case; but this of a grain does not, and shows Paul to have been what he says of others, *a fool.*

Whether the fourteen epistles ascribed to Paul were written by him or not, is a matter of indifference; they are either argumentative or dogmatical; and as the argument is defective, and the dogmatical part is merely presumptive, it signifies not who wrote them. And the same may be said for the remaining parts of the Testament. It is not upon the epistles, but upon what is called the gospel, contained in the four books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and upon the pretended prophecies, that the theory of the church, calling itself the Christian church, is founded. The epistles are dependent upon those, and must follow their fate; for if the story of Jesus Christ be fabulous, all reasoning founded upon it as a supposed truth, must fall with it.

We know from history, that one of the principal leaders of this church, Athanasius, lived at the time the New Testament was formed;* and we know also, from the absurd jargon he has left us under the name of a creed, the character of the men who formed the New Testament; and we know also from the same

* Athanasius died, according to the church chronology, in the year 371.

history, that the authenticity of the books of which it is composed was denied at the time. It was upon the vote of such as Athanasius, that the Testament was decreed to be the word of God; and nothing can present to us a more strange idea than that of decreeing the word of God by vote. Those who rest their faith upon such authority, put man in the place of God, and have no foundation for future happiness; credulity, however, is not a crime; but it becomes criminal by resisting conviction. It is strangling in the womb of the conscience the efforts it makes to ascertain truth. We should never force belief upon ourselves in any thing.

I here close the subject on the Old Testament and the New. The evidence I have produced to prove them forgeries, is extracted from the books themselves, and acts, like a two edged sword, either way. If the evidence be denied, the authenticity of the scriptures is denied with it; for it is scripture evidence: and if the evidence be admitted, the authenticity of the books is disproved. The contradictory impossibilities contained in the Old Testament and the New, put them in the case of a man who swears for and against. Either evidence convicts him of perjury, and equally destroys reputation.

Should the Bible and the Testament hereafter fall, it is not I that have been the occasion. I have done no more than extracted the evidence from that confused mass of matter with which it is mixed, and arranged that evidence in a point of light to be clearly seen and easily comprehended; and, having done this, I leave the reader to judge for himself, as I have judged for myself.

CONCLUSION.

In the former part of the *Age of Reason*, I have spoken of the three frauds, *mystery*, *miracle*, and *prophecy;* and as I have seen nothing in any of the answers to that work, that in the least effects what I have there said upon those subjects, I shall not encumber this Second Part with additions that are not necessary.

I have spoken also in the same work upon what is called *revelation*, and have shown the absurd misapplication of that term to the books of the Old Testament and the New; for certainly revela-

tion is out of the question in reciting any thing of which man has been the actor or the witness. That which a man has done or seen, needs no revelation to tell him he has done it, or seen it; for he knows it already; nor to enable him to tell it, or to write it. It is ignorance, or imposition, to apply the term revelation in such cases; yet the Bible and Testament are classed under this fraudulent description of being all *revelation.*

Revelation then, so far as the term has relation between God and man, can only be applied to something which God reveals of his *will* to man; but though the power of the Almighty to make such a communication, is necessarily admitted, because to that power all things are possible, yet, the thing so revealed (if any thing ever was revealed, and which, by the bye, it is impossible to prove) is revelation to the person *only to whom it is made.* His account of it to another is not revelation; and whoever puts faith in that acccount, puts it in the man from whom the account comes; and that man may have been deceived, or may have dreamed it; or he may be an impostor, and may lie. There is no possible criterion whereby to judge of the truth of what he tells: for even the morality of it would be no proof of revelation. In all such cases, the proper answer would be, "*When it is revealed to me, I will believe it to be a revelation; but it is not, and cannot be incumbent upon me to believe it to be revelation before; neither is it proper that I should take the word of a man as the word of God, and put man in the place of God.*" This is the manner in which I have spoken of revelation in the former part of the *Age of Reason;* and which, while it reverentially admits revelation as a possible thing, because, as before said, to the Almighty all things are possible, it prevents the imposition of one man upon another, and precludes the wicked use of pretended revelation.

But though, speaking for myself, I thus admit the possibility of revelation, I totally disbelieve that the Almighty ever did communicate any thing to man, by any mode of speech, in any language, or by any kind of vision, or appearance, or by any means which our senses are capable of receiving, otherwise than by the universal display of himself in the works of the creation, and by that repugnance we feel in ourselves to bad actions, and disposition to do good ones.

The most detestable wickedness, the most horrid cruelties, and the greatest miseries, that have afflicted the human race, have had

their origin in this thing called revelation, or revealed religion. It has been the most dishonorable belief against the character of the Divinity, the most destructive to morality, and the peace and happiness of man, that ever was propagated since man began to exist. It is better, far better, that we admitted, if it were possible, a thousand devils to roam at large, and to preach publicly the doctrine of devils, if there were any such, than that we permitted one such imposter and monster as Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and the Bible prophets, to come with the pretended word of God in his mouth, and have credit among us.

Whence arose all the horrid assassinations of whole nations of men, women, and infants, with which the Bible is filled: and the bloody persecutions, and tortures unto death, and religious wars, that since that time have laid Europe in blood and ashes; whence arose they, but from this impious thing called revealed religion, and this monstrous belief, that God has spoken to man? The lies of the Bible have been the cause of the one, and the lies of the Testament of the other.

Some Christians pretend, that Christianity was not established by the sword; but of what period of time do they speak? It was impossible that twelve men could begin with the sword; they had not the power; but no sooner were the professors of Christianity sufficiently powerful to employ the sword, than they did so, and the stake and the faggot too; and Mahomet could not do it sooner. By the same spirit that Peter cut off the ear of the high priest's servant (if the story be true) he would have cut off his head, and the head of his master, had he been able. Besides this, Christianity grounds itself originally upon the Bible, and the Bible was established altogether by the sword, and that in the worst use of it; not to terrify, but to extirpate. The Jews made no converts; they butchered all. The Bible is the sire of the Testament, and both are called the *word of God*. The Christians read both books; the ministers preach from both books; and this thing called Christianity is made up of both. It is then false to say that Christianity was not established by the sword.

The only sect that has not persecuted are the Quakers; and the only reason that can be given for it is, that they are rather Deists than Christians. They do not believe much about Jesus Christ, and they call the Scriptures a dead letter. Had they called them by a worse name, they had been nearer the truth.

It is incumbent on every man who reverences the character of the Creator, and who wishes to lessen the catalogue of artificial miseries, and remove the cause that has sown persecutions thick among mankind, to expel all ideas of revealed religion as a dangerous heresy, and an impious fraud. What is it that we have learned from this pretended thing called revealed religion?—nothing that is useful to man, and every thing that is dishonourable to his Maker. What is it the Bible teaches us?—rapine, cruelty, and murder. What is it the Testament teaches us?—to believe that the Almighty committed debauchery with a woman, engaged to be married! and the belief of this debauchery is called faith.

As to the fragments of morality that are irregularly and thinly scattered in those books, they make no part of this pretended thing revealed religion. They are the natural dictates of conscience, and the bonds by which society is held together, and without which it cannot exist; and are nearly the same in all religions, and in all societies. The Testament teaches nothing new upon this subject, and where it attempts to exceed, it becomes mean and ridiculous. The doctrine of not retaliating injuries, is much better expressed in proverbs, which is a collection as well from the Gentiles as the Jews, than it is in the Testament. It is there said, Proverbs xxv. ver. 21, "*If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:**" but when it is said, as in the Testament, "*If a man smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also;*" it is assassinating the dignity of forbearance, and sinking man into a spaniel.

Loving enemies, is another dogma of feigned morality, and has besides no meaning. It is incumbent on man, as a moralist, that he does not revenge an injury; and it is equally as good in a political sense, for there is no end to retaliation, each retaliates on

* According to what is called Christ's sermon on the mount, in the book of Matthew, where, among some other good things, a great deal of this feigned morality is introduced, it is there expressly said, that the doctrine of forbearance, or of not retaliating injuries, *was not any part of the doctrine of the Jews;* but as this doctrine is founded in proverbs, it must, according to that statement, have been copied from the Gentiles, from whom Christ had learned it. Those men, whom Jewish and Christian idolators have abusively called heathens, had much better and clearer ideas of justice and morality, than are to be found in the Old Testament, so far as it is Jewish; or in the New. The answer of Solon on the question, "Which is the most perfect popular government," has never been exceeded by any man since his time, as containing a maxim of political morality. "That," says he, "*where the least injury done to the meanest individual, is considered as an insult on the whole constitution.*" Solon lived about 500 years before Christ.

the other, and calls it justice ; but to love in proportion to the injury, if it could be done, would be to offer a premium for crime. Besides the word *enemies* is too vague and general to be used in a moral maxim, which ought always to be clear and defined, like a proverb. If a man be the enemy of another from mistake and prejudice, as in the case of religious opinions, and sometimes in politics, that man is different to an enemy at heart with a criminal intention ; and it is incumbent upon us, and it contributes also to our own tranquillity, that we put the best construction upon a thing that it will bear. But even this erroneous motive in him, makes no motive for love on the other part ; and to say that we can love voluntarily, and without a motive, is morally and physically impossible.

Morality is injured by prescribing to it duties, that, in the first place, are impossible to be performed; and, if they could be, would be productive of evil ; or, as before said, be premiums for crime. The maxim *of doing as we would be done unto*, does not include this strange doctrine of loving enemies ; for no man expects to be loved himself for his crime or for his enmity.

Those who preach this doctrine of loving their enemies, are in general the greatest persecutors, and they act consistently by so doing ; for the doctrine is hypocritical, and it is natural that hypocrisy should act the reverse of what it preaches. For my own part, I disown the doctrine, and consider it as a feigned or fabulous morality ; yet the man does not exist that can say I have persecuted him, or any man or any set of men, either in the American Revolution, or in the French Revolution ; or that I have, in any case, returned evil for evil. But it is not incumbent on man to reward a bad action with a good one, or to return good for evil ; and wherever it is done, it is a voluntary act, and not a duty. It is also absurd to suppose that such doctrine can make any part of a revealed religion. We imitate the moral character of the Creator by forbearing with each other, for he forbears with all; but this doctrine would imply that he loved man, not in proportion as he was good, but as he was bad.

If we consider the nature of our condition here, we must see there is no occasion for such a thing as *revealed religion*. What is it we want to know ? Does not the creation, the universe we behold, preach to us the existence of an Almighty power that governs and regulates the whole ? And is not the evidence that

this creation holds out to our senses infinitely stronger than any thing we can read in a book, that any imposter might make and call the word of God? As for morality, the knowledge of it exists in every man's conscience.

Here we are. The existence of an Almighty power is sufficiently demonstrated to us, though we cannot conceive, as it is impossible we should, the nature and manner of its existence. We cannot conceive how we came here ourselves, and yet we know for a fact that we are here. We must know also, that the power that called us into being, can, if he please, and when he pleases, call us to account for the manner in which we have lived here; and, therefore, without seeking any other motive for the belief, it is rational to believe that he will, for we know before-hand that he can. The probability, or even possibility of the thing is all that we ought to know; for if we knew it as a fact, we should be the mere slaves of terror: our belief would have no merit; and our best actions no virtue.

Deism then teaches us, without the possibility of being deceived, all that is necessary or proper to be known. The creation is the Bible of the Deist. He there reads, in the hand-writing of the Creator himself, the certainty of his existence, and the immutability of his power, and all other Bibles and Testaments are to him forgeries. The probability that we may be called to account hereafter, will, to a reflecting mind, have the influence of belief; for it is not our belief or disbelief that can make or unmake the fact. As this is the state we are in, and which it is proper we should be in, as free agents, it is the fool only, and not the philosopher, or even the prudent man, that would live as if there were no God.

But the belief of a God is so weakened by being mixed with the strange fable of the Christian creed, and with the wild adventures related in the Bible, and of the obscurity and obscene nonsense of the Testament, that the mind of man is bewildered as in a fog. Viewing all these things in a confused mass, he confounds fact with fable; and as he cannot believe all, he feels a disposition to reject all. But the belief of a God is a belief distinct from all other things, and ought not to be confounded with any. The notion of a Trinity of Gods has enfeebled the belief of one God. A multiplication of beliefs acts as a division of belief: and in proportion as any thing is divided it is weakened.

Religion, by such means, becomes a thing of form, instead of fact; of notion, instead of principles; morality is banished, to make room for an imaginary thing, called faith, and this faith has its origin in a supposed debauchery; a man is preached instead of God; an execution is an object for gratitude; the preachers daub themselves with the blood, like a troop of assassins, and pretend to admire the brilliancy it gives them; they preach a humdrum sermon on the merits of the execution; then praise Jesus Christ for being executed, and condemn the Jews for doing it.

A man, by hearing all this nonsense lumped and preached together, confounds the God of the creation with the imagined God of the Christians, and lives as if there were none.

Of all the systems of religion that ever were invented, there is none more derogatory to the Almighty, more unedifying to man, more repugnant to reason, and more contradictory in itself, than this thing called Christianity. Too absurd for belief, too impossible to convince, and too inconsistent for practice, it renders the heart torpid, or produces only atheists and fanatics. As an engine of power, it serves the purpose of despotism; and as a means of wealth, the avarice of priests; but so far as respects the good of man in general, it leads to nothing here or hereafter.

The only religion that has not been invented, and that has in it every evidence of divine originality, is pure and simple Deism. It must have been the first, and will probably be the last that man believes. But pure and simple Deism does not answer the purpose of despotic governments. They cannot lay hold of religion as an engine, but by mixing it with human inventions, and making their own authority a part; neither does it answer the avarice of priests but by incorporating themselves and their functions with it, and becoming, like the government, a party in the system. It is this that forms the otherwise mysterious connection of church and state; the church humane, and the state tyrannic.

Were man impressed as fully and as strongly as he ought to be with the belief of a God, his moral life would be regulated by the force of that belief; he would stand in awe of God, and of himself, and would not do the thing that could not be concealed from either. To give this belief the full opportunity of force, it is necessary that it acts alone. This is Deism.

But when, according to the Christian Trinitarian scheme, one part of God is represented by a dying man, and another part called the Holy Ghost, by a flying pigeon, it is impossible that belief can attach itself to such wild conceits.*

It has been the scheme of the Christian church, and of all the other invented systems of religion, to hold man in ignorance of the Creator, as it is of government to hold man in ignorance of his rights. The systems of the one are as false as those of the other, and are calculated for mutual support. The study of theology, as it stands in Christian churches, is the study of nothing; it is founded on nothing; it rests on no principles; it proceeds by no authorities; it has no data; it can demonstrate nothing; and it admits of no conclusion. Not any thing can be studied as a science, without our being in possession of the principles upon which it is founded; and as this is not the case with Christian theology, it is therefore the study of nothing.

Instead then of studying theology, as is now done, out of the Bible and Testament, the meanings of which books are always controverted, and the authenticity of which is disproved, it is necessary that we refer to the Bible of the creation. The principles we discover there are eternal, and of divine origin: they are the foundation of all the science that exists in the world, and must be the foundation of theology.

We can know God only through his works. We cannot have a conception of any one attribute, but by following some principle that leads to it. We have only a confused idea of his power, if we have not the means of comprehending something of its immensity. We can have no idea of his wisdom, but by knowing the order and manner in which it acts. The principles of science lead to this knowledge; for the Creator of man is the Creator of science; and it is through that medium that man can see God, as it were, face to face.

Could a man be placed in a situation, and endowed with the power of vision, to behold at one view, and to contemplate deliberately, the structure of the universe; to mark the movements of

* The book called the book of Matthew, says, chap. iii. ver. 16, that *the Holy Ghost descended in the shape of a dove.* It might as well have said a goose; the creatures are equally harmless, and the one is as much a nonsensical lie as the other. The second of Acts, ver. 2, 3, says, that it descended in a mighty *rushing wind*, in the shape of *cloven tongues:* perhaps it was cloven feet. Such absurd stuff is only fit for tales of witches and wizards.

the several planets, the cause of their varying appearances, the unerring order in which they revolve, even to the remotest comet; their connection and dependence on each other, and to know the system of laws established by the Creator, that governs and regulates the whole; he would then conceive, far beyond what any church theology can teach him, the power, the wisdom, the vastness, the munificence of the Creator; he would then see, that all the knowledge man has of science, and that all the mechanical arts by which he renders his situation comfortable here, are derived from that source: his mind, exalted by the scene, and convinced by the fact, would increase in gratitude as it increased in knowledge; his religion or his worship would become united with his improvement as a man; any employment he followed, that had connection with the principles of the creation, as every thing of agriculture, of science, and of the mechanical arts, has, would teach him more of God, and of the gratitude he owes to him, than any theological Christian sermon he now hears. Great objects inspire great thoughts; great munificence excites great gratitude; but the groveling tales and doctrines of the Bible and the Testament are fit only to excite contempt.

Though man cannot arrive, at least in this life, at the actual scene I have described, he can demonstrate it; because he has a knowledge of the principles upon which the creation is constructed. We know that the greatest works can be represented in model, and that the universe can be represented by the same means. The same principles by which we measure an inch, or an acre of ground, will measure to millions in extent. A circle of an inch diameter, has the same geometrical properties as a circle that would circumscribe the universe. The same properties of a triangle that will demonstrate upon paper the course of a ship, will do it on the ocean; and when applied to what are called the heavenly bodies, will ascertain to a minute the time of an eclipse, though these bodies are millions of miles distant from us. This knowledge is of divine origin; and it is from the Bible of the creation that man has learned it, and not from the stupid Bible of the church, that teacheth man nothing.*

* The Bible-makers have undertaken to give us, in the first chapter of Genesis, an account of the creation; and in doing this they have demonstrated nothing but their ignorance. They make there to have been three days and three nights, evenings and mornings, before there was a sun; when it is the presence or absence of a sun that is the cause of day and night—and what is

All the knowledge man has of science and of machinery, by the aid of which his existence is rendered comfortable upon earth, and without which he would be scarcely distinguishable in appearance and condition from a common animal, comes from the great machine and structure of the universe. The constant and unwearied observations of our ancestors upon the movements and revolutions of the heavenly bodies, in what are supposed to have been the early ages of the world, have brought this knowledge upon earth. It is not Moses and the prophets, nor Jesus Christ, nor his apostles that have done it. The Almighty is the great mechanic of the creation; the first philosopher and original teacher of all science;—Let us then learn to reverence our master, and not let us forget the labours of our ancestors.

Had we, at this day, no knowledge of machinery, and were it possible that man could have a view, as I have before described, of the structure and machinery of the universe, he would soon conceive the idea of constructing some at least of the mechanical works we now have: and the idea so conceived would progressively advance in practice. Or could a model of the universe, such as is called an orrery, be presented before him and put in motion, his mind would arrive at the same idea. Such an object and such a subject would, whilst it improved him in knowledge useful to himself as a man and a member of society, as well as entertaining, afford far better matter for impressing him with a knowledge of, and a belief in the Creator, and of the reverence and gratitude that man owes to him, than the stupid texts of the Bible and of the Testament, from which, be the talents of the preacher what they may, only stupid sermons can be preached. If man must preach, let him preach something that is edifying. and from texts that are known to be true.

The Bible of the creation is inexhaustible in texts. Every part

called his rising and setting, that of morning and evening. Besides, it is a puerile and pitiful idea, to suppose the Almighty to say, "Let there be light." It is the imperative manner of speaking that a conjurer uses, when he says to his cups and balls, Presto, be gone—and most probably has been taken from it, as Moses and his rod are a conjurer and his wand. Longinus calls this expression the sublime; and by the same rule the conjurer is sublime too; for the manner of speaking is expressively and grammatically the same. When authors and critics talk of the sublime, they see not how nearly it borders on the ridiculous. The sublime of the critics, like some parts of Edmund Burke's sublime and beautiful, is like a wind-mill just visible in a fog, which imagination might distort into a flying mountain, or an archangel, or a flock of wild geese.

of science, whether connected with the geometry of the universe, with the systems of animal and vegetable life, or with the properties of inanimate matter, is a text as well for devotion as for philosophy—for gratitude as for human improvement. It will perhaps be said, that if such a revolution in the system of religion takes place, every preacher ought to be a philosopher.—*Most certainly;* and every house of devotion a school of science.

It has been by wandering from the immutable laws of science, and the right use of reason, and setting up an invented thing called revealed religion, that so many wild and blasphemous conceits have been formed of the Almighty. The Jews have made him the assassin of the human species, to make room for the religion of the Jews. The Christians have made him the murderer of himself, and the founder of a new religion, to supercede and expel the Jewish religion. And to find pretence and admission for these things, they must have supposed his power and his wisdom imperfect, or his will changeable; and the changeableness of the will is the imperfection of the judgment. The philosopher knows that the laws of the Creator have never changed with respect either to the principles of science, or the properties of matter. Why then is it to be supposed they have changed with respect to man?

I here close the subject. I have shown in all the foregoing parts of this work that the Bible and Testament are impositions and forgeries; and I leave the evidence I have produced in proof of it to be refuted, if any one can do it: and I leave the ideas that are suggested in the conclusion of the work to rest on the mind of the reader; certain as I am, that when opinions are free, either in matters of government or religion, truth will finally and powerfully prevail.

THE END.

A

LETTER;

BEING

AN ANSWER TO A FRIEND,

ON THE PUBLICATION OF

THE AGE OF REASON.

PARIS, MAY 12, 1797.

In your letter of the 20th of March, you gave me several quotations from the Bible, which you call the *word of God*, to show me that my opinions on religion are wrong, and I could give you as many, from the same book, to show that yours are not right; consequently, then, the Bible decides nothing, because it decides any way, and every way, one chooses to make it.

But by what authority do you call the Bible the *word of God?* for this is the first point to be settled. It is not your calling it so that makes it so, any more than the Mahometans calling the Koran the *word of God* makes the Koran to be so. The Popish Councils of Nice and Laodicea, about 350 years after the time that the person called Jesus Christ is said to have lived, voted the books, that now compose what is called the New Testament, to be the *word of God.* This was done by *yeas* and *nays*, as we now vote a law. The Pharisees of the second Temple, after the Jews returned from captivity in Babylon, did the same by the books that now compose the Old Testament, and this is all the authority there is, which to me is no authority at all. I am as capable of judging for myself as they were, and I think more so, because, as they made a living by their religion, they had a self-interest in the vote they gave.

You may have an opinion that a man is inspired, but you cannot prove it, nor can you have any proof of it yourself, because you cannot see into his mind in order to know how he comes by his thoughts, and the same is the case with the word *revelation*.—There can be no evidence of such a thing, for you can no more prove revelation, than you can prove what another man dreams of, neither can he prove it himself.

It is often said in the Bible that God spake unto Moses, but how do you know that God spake unto Moses? Because, you will say, the Bible says so. The Koran says, that God spake unto Mahomet, do you believe that too? No. Why not? Because, you will say, you do not believe it; and so because you *do*, and because you *don't*, is all the reason you can give for believing or disbelieving, except you will say that Mahomet was an imposter. And how do you know Moses was not an imposter? For my own part, I believe that all are imposters who pretend to hold verbal communication with the Deity. It is the way by which the world has been imposed upon; but if you think otherwise you have the same right to your opinion that I have to mine, and must answer for it in the same manner. But all this does not settle the point, whether the Bible be the *word of God*, or not. It is, therefore, necessary to go a step further. The case then is:—

You form your opinion of God from the account given of him in the Bible; and I form my opinion of the Bible from the wisdom and goodness of God, manifested in the structure of the universe, and in all the works of the Creation. The result in these two cases will be, that you, by taking the Bible for your standard, will have a bad opinion of God; and I, by taking God for my standard, shall have a bad opinion of the Bible.

The Bible represents God to be a changeable, passionate, vindictive being; making a world, and then drowning it, afterwards repenting of what he had done, and promising not to do so again. Setting one nation to cut the throats of another, and stopping the course of the sun till the butchery should be done. But the works of God, in the Creation, preach to us another doctrine. In that vast volume we see nothing to give us the idea of a changeable, passionate, vindictive God, every thing we there behold impresses us with a contrary idea; that of unchangeableness and of eternal order, harmony, and goodness. The sun and the seasons return at their appointed time, and every thing in the Creation proclaims

that God is unchangeable. Now, which am I to believe, a book that any impostor may make, and call the *word of God*, or the Creation itself which none but an Almighty Power could make, for the Bible says one thing, and the Creation says the contrary. The Bible represents God with all the passions of a mortal, and the Creation proclaims him with all the attributes of a God.

It is from the Bible that man has learned cruelty, rapine, and murder; for the belief of a cruel God makes a cruel man. That blood-thirsty man, called the prophet Samuel, makes God to say, (1 Sam. chap. xv. ver. 3,) "Now go and smite Amaleck, and utterly destroy all that they have, and *spare them not, but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.*"

That Samuel, or some other impostor, might say this, is what, at this distance of time, can neither be proved nor disproved, but, in my opinion, it is blasphemy to say, or to believe, that God said it. All our ideas of the justice and goodness of God revolt at the impious cruelty of the Bible. It is not a God, just and good, but a devil, under the name of God, that the Bible describes.

What makes this pretended order to destroy the Amalekites appear the worse, is the reason given for it. The Amalekites, four hundred years before, according to the account in Exodus, chap. 17, (but which has the appearance of fable from the magical account it gives of Moses holding up his hands,) had opposed the Israelites coming into their country, and this the Amalekites had a right to do, because the Israelites were the invaders, as the Spaniards were the invaders of Mexico; and this opposition by the Amalekites, *at that time*, is given as a reason, that the men, women, infants and sucklings, sheep and oxen, camels and asses, that were born four hundred years afterwards, should be put to death; and to complete the horror, Samuel hewed Agag, the chief of the Amalekites, in pieces, as you would hew a stick of wood, I will bestow a few observations on this case.

In the first place, nobody knows who the author, or writer, of the book of Samuel was, and, therefore, the fact itself has no other proof than anonymous or hearsay evidence, which is no evidence at all. In the second place, this anonymous book says, that this slaughter was done by *the express command of God:* but all our ideas of the justice and goodness of God give the lie to the book, and as I never will believe any book that ascribes cruelty

and injustice to God. I, therefore, reject the Bible as unworthy of credit.

As I have now given you my reasons for believing that the Bible is *not* the word of God, and that it is a falsehood, I have a right to ask you your reasons for believing the contrary; but I know you can give me none, except that *you were educated to believe the Bible*, and as the Turks give the same reason for believing the Koran, it is evident that education makes all the difference, and that reason and truth have nothing to do in the case. You believe in the Bible from the accident of birth, and the Turks believe in the Koran from the same accident, and each calls the other *infidel*.—But leaving the prejudice of education out of the case, the unprejudiced truth is, that all are infidels who believe falsely of God, whether they draw their creed from the Bible, or from the Koran, from the Old Testament or from the New.

When you have examined the Bible with the attention that I have done, (for I do not think you know much about it,) and permit yourself to have just ideas of God, you will most probably believe as I do. But I wish you to know that this answer to your letter is not written for the purpose of changing your opinion. It is written to satisfy you, and some other friends whom I esteem, that my disbelief of the Bible is founded on a pure and religious belief in God; for, in my opinion, the Bible is a gross libel against the justice and goodness of God, in almost every part of it.

THOMAS PAINE.

A

LETTER TO MR. ERSKINE.*

Of all the tyrannies that afflict mankind, tyranny in religion is the worst: every other species of tyranny is limited to the world we live in; but this attempts a stride beyond the grave, and seeks to pursue us into eternity. It is there and not here—it is to God and not to man—it is to a heavenly and not to an earthly tribunal that we are to account for our belief; if then we believe falsely and dishonourably of the Creator, and that belief is forced upon us, as far as force can operate by human laws and human tribunals,—on whom is the criminality of that belief to fall? on those who impose it, or on those on whom it is imposed?

A bookseller of the name of Williams has been prosecuted in London on a charge of blasphemy, for publishing a book entitled the *Age of Reason*. Blasphemy is a word of vast sound, but equivocal and almost indefinite signification, unless we confine it to the simple idea of hurting or injuring the reputation of any one, which was its original meaning. As a word, it existed before Christianity existed, being a Greek word, or Greek anglofied, as all the etymological dictionaries will show.

But behold how various and contradictory has been the signification and application of this equivocal word. Socrates, who lived more than four hundred years before the Christian era, was

* Mr. Paine has evidently incorporated into this Letter a portion of his answer to Bishop Watson's "Apology for the Bible;" as in a chapter of that work, treating of the Book of Genesis, he expressly refers to his remarks, in a preceding part of the same, on the two accounts of the creation contained in that book; which is included in this letter.

convicted of blasphemy, for preaching against the belief of a plurality of gods, and for preaching the belief of one god, and was condemned to suffer death by poison. Jesus Christ was convicted of blasphemy under the Jewish law, and was crucified. Calling Mahomet an impostor would be blasphemy in Turkey; and denying the infallibility of the Pope, and the Church, would be blasphemy at Rome. What then is to be understood by this word blasphemy? We see that in the case of Socrates truth was condemned as blasphemy. Are we sure that truth is not blasphemy in the present day? Woe, however, be to those who make it so, whoever they may be.

A book called the Bible has been voted by men, and decreed by human laws to be the word of God; and the disbelief of this is called blasphemy. But if the Bible be not the word of God, it is the laws and the execution of them that is blasphemy, and not the disbelief. Strange stories are told of the Creator in that book. He is represented as acting under the influence of every human passion, even of the most malignant kind. If these stories are false, we err in believing them to be true, and ought not to believe them. It is, therefore, a duty which every man owes to himself, and reverentially to his Maker, to ascertain, by every possible inquiry, whether there be sufficient evidence to believe them or not.

My own opinion is, decidedly, that the evidence does not warrant the belief, and that we sin in forcing that belief upon ourselves and upon others. In saying this, I have no other object in view than truth. But that I may not be accused of resting upon bare assertion with respect to the equivocal state of the Bible, I will produce an example, and I will not pick and cull the Bible for the purpose. I will go fairly to the case: I will take the two first chapters of Genesis as they stand, and show from thence the truth of what I say, that is, that the evidence does not warrant the belief that the Bible is the word of God.

CHAPTER I.

1. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

2. And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

3. And God said, Let there be light; and there was light.

4. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from darkness.

5. And God called the light day, and the darkness he called night: and the evening and the morning were the first day.

6. ¶ And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

7. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament, from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.

8. And God called the firmament heaven; and the evening and the morning were the second day.

9. ¶ And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.

10. And God called the dry land earth, and the gathering together of the waters called he seas, and God saw that it was good.

11. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb, yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth, and it was so.

12. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

13. And the evening and the morning were the third day.

14. ¶ And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night: and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.

15. And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth: and it was so.

16. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.

17. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth,

18. And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good.

19. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

20. And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

21. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

22. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.

23. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

24. ¶ And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.

25. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

26. ¶ And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

27. *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them.*

28. *And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*

29. ¶ And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed: to you it shall be for meat.

30. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.

31. And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

CHAPTER II.

1. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

2. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

3. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work, which God created and made.

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4. ¶ These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth, when they were created; in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

5. And every plant of the field, before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field, before it grew; for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, *and there was not a man to till the ground.*

6. But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

7. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

8. And the Lord God planted a garden eastward of Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

9. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

10. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden: and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.

11. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold.

12. And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx-stone.

13. And the name of the second river is Gibon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia.

14. And the name of the third river is Heddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates.

15. And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it.

16. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

17. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.

18. ¶ And the Lord God said, it is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an help meet for him.

19. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam, to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

20. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

21. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof.

22. And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

23. And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man.

24. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.

25. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

These two chapters are called the Mosaic account of the creation; and we are told, nobody knows by whom, that Moses was instructed by God to write that account.

It has happened that every nation of people has been world-makers; and each makes the world to begin his own way, as if they had all been brought up, as Hudibras says, to the trade. There are hundreds of different opinions and traditions how the world began.* My business, however, in this place, is only with those two chapters.

* In this world-making trade, man, of course, has held a conspicuous place; and, for the gratification of the curious enquirer, the editor subjoins two spe-

I begin then by saying, that those two chapters, instead of containing, as has been believed, one continued account of the creation, written by Moses, contain two different and con-

cimens of the opinions of learned men, in regard to the manner of his formation, and of his subsequent fall. The first he extracts from the Talmud, a work containing the Jewish traditions, the rabbinical constitutions, and explication of the law; and is of great authority among the Jews. It was composed by certain learned rabbins, comprehends twelve bulky folios, and forty years are said to have been consumed in its compilation. In fact, it is deemed to contain the *whole body of divinity* for the Jewish nation. Although the Scriptures tell us that *the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground*, they do not explain the manner in which it was done, and these doctors supply the deficiency as follows:—

"Adam's *body* was made of the earth of Babylon, his *head* of the land of Israel, his other *members* of other parts of the world. R. Meir thought he was compact of the earth, gathered out of the whole earth; as it is written, *thine eyes did see my substance.* Now it is elsewhere written, *the eyes of the Lord are over all the earth.* R. Aha expressly marks the twelve hours in which his various parts were formed. His stature was from one end of the world to the other; and it was for his transgression that the Creator, laying his hand in anger on him, lessened him; for before, says R. Eleazer, with his hand he reached the firmament. R. Jehuda thinks his sin was heresy; but R. Isaac thinks it was nourishing his foreskin."

The Mahometan savans give the following account of the same transaction:—

"When God wished to create man, he sent the angel Gabriel to take a handfull of each of the seven beds which composed the earth. But when the latter heard the order of God, she felt much alarmed, and requested the heavenly messenger to represent to God, that as the creature he was about to form might chance to rebel one day against him, this would be the means of bringing upon herself the divine malediction. God, however, far from listening to this request, despatched two other angels, Michael and Azrael, to execute his will; but they, moved with compassion, were prevailed upon again to lay the complaints of the earth at the feet of her author. Then God confined the execution of his commands to the formidable Azrael alone, who, regardless of all the earth might say, violently tore from her bosom seven handfuls from her various strata, and carried them into Arabia, where the work of creation was to be completed. As to Azrael, God was so well pleased with the decisive manner in which he had acted, that he gave him the office of separating the soul from the body, whence he is called the Angel of Death.

"Meanwhile, the angels having kneaded this earth, God moulded it with his own hands, and left it some time that it might get dry. The angels delighted to gaze upon the lifeless, but beautiful mass, with the exception of Eblis, or Lucifer, who, bent upon evil, struck it upon the stomach, which giving a hollow sound, he said, since this creature will be hollow, it will often need being filled, and will be, therefore, exposed to pregnant temptations. Upon this, he asked the angels how they would act if God wished to render them dependent upon this sovereign which he was about to give to the earth. They readily answered that they would obey; but though Eblis did not openly dissent, he resolved within himself that he would not follow their example.

"After the body of the first man had been properly prepared, God animated it with an intelligent soul, and clad him in splendid and marvellous garments, suited to the dignity of this favoured being. He now commanded his angels to fall prostrate before Adam. All of them obeyed, with the exception of Eblis, who was in consequence immediately expelled from heaven, and his place given to Adam.

"The formation of Eve from one of the ribs of the first man, is the same as that recorded in the Bible, as is also the order given to the father of mankind, not to taste the fruit of a particular tree. Eblis seized this opportunity of re-

tradictory stories of a creation, made by two different persons, and written in two different styles of expression. The evidence that shows this is so clear, when attended to without prejudice, that, did we meet with the same evidence in any Arabic or Chinese account of a creation, we should not hesitate in pronouncing it a forgery.

I proceed to distinguish the two stories from each other.

The first story begins at the first verse of the first chapter, and ends at the end of the third verse of the second chapter; for the adverbial conjunction, THUS, with which the second chapter begins, (as the reader will see,) connects itself to the last verse of the first chapter, and those three verses belong to, and make the conclusion of the first story.

The second story begins at the fourth verse of the second chapter, and ends with that chapter. Those two stories have been confused into one, by cutting off the three last verses of the first story, and throwing them to the second chapter.

I go now to show that those stories have been written by two different persons.

From the first verse of the first chapter to the end of the third verse of the second chapter, which makes the whole of the first story, the word GOD is used without any epithet or additional word conjoined with it, as the reader will see: and this style of expression is invariably used throughout the whole of this story, and is repeated no less than thirty-five times, viz. "In the beginning GOD created the heavens and the earth, and the spirit of GOD

venge. Having associated the peacock and the serpent in the enterprise, they by their wily speeches at length persuaded Adam to become guilty of disobedience. But no sooner had they touched the forbidden fruit, than their garments dropped on the ground, and the sight of their nakedness covered them both with shame and with confusion. They made a covering for their body with fig leaves; but they were both immediately condemned to labour, and to die, and hurled down from Paradise.

"Adam fell upon the mountain of Sarendip, in the island of Ceylon, where a mountain is called by his name to the present day. Eve, being separated from her spouse in her fall, alighted on the spot where China now stands, and Eblis fell not far from the same spot. As to the peacock and the snake, the former dropped in Hindostan and the latter in Arabia. Adam soon feeling the enormity of his fault, implored the mercy of God, who relenting, sent down his angels from heaven with a tabernacle, which they placed on the spot where Abraham, at a subsequent period, built the temple of Mecca. Gabriel instructed him in the rites and ceremonies performed about the sanctuary, in order that he might obtain the forgiveness of his offence, and afterwards led him to the mountain of Ararat, where he met Eve, from whom he had been now separated above two hundred years."

moved on the face of the waters, and GOD said, let there be lighg and GOD saw the light," &c. &c.

But immediately from the beginning of the fourth verse of the second chapter, where the second story begins, the style of expression is always the *Lord God*, and this style of expression is invariably used to the end of the chapter, and is repeated eleven times; in the one it is always GOD, and never the *Lord God*, in the other it is always the *Lord God* and never GOD. The first story contains thirty-four verses, and repeats the single word GOD thirty-five times. The second story contains twenty-two verses, and repeats the compound word *Lord-God* eleven times; this difference of style, so often repeated, and so uniformly continued, shows, that those two chapters, containing two different stories, are written by different persons; it is the same in all the different editions of the Bible, in all the languages I have seen.

Having thus shown, from the difference of style, that those two chapters divided, as they properly divide themselves, at the end of the third verse of the second chapter, are the work of two different persons, I come to show, from the contradictory matters they contain, that they cannot be the work of one person, and are two different stories.

It is impossible, unless the writer was a lunatic, without memory, that one and the same person could say, as is said in the 27th and 28th verses of the first chapter—"*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them: and God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and every living thing that moveth on the face of the earth.*" It is, I say, impossible that the same person who said this, could afterwards say, as is said in the second chapter, ver. 5, *and there was not a man to till the ground;* and then proceed in the 7th verse to give another account of the making a man for the first time, and afterwards of the making a woman out of his rib.

Again, one and the same person could not write, as is written in the 29th verse of the first chapter: "Behold I (God) have given you every herb bearing seed, which is on the face of the earth; and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree bearing seed, to you it shall be for meat," and afterwards say, as is said in the

second chapter, that the Lord-God planted a tree in the midst of a garden, and forbad man to eat thereof.

Again, one and the same person could not say, "*Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them, and on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made;*" and shortly after set the Creator to work again, to plant a garden, to make a man and a woman, &c. as is done in the second chapter.

Here are evidently two different stories contradicting each other.—According to the first, the two sexes, the male and the female, were made at the same time. According to the second, they were made at different times: the man first, the woman afterwards.—According to the first story, they were to have dominion over all the earth. According to the second, their dominion was limited to a garden. How large a garden it could be, that one man and one woman could dress and keep in order, I leave to the prosecutor, the judge, the jury, and Mr. Erskine to determine.

The story of the talking serpent, and its tete-a-tete with Eve; the doleful adventure called the *Fall of Man*; and how he was turned out of this fine garden, and how the garden was afterwards locked up and guarded by a flaming sword, (if any one can tell what a flaming sword is,) belonging altogether to the second story. They have no connexion with the first story. According to the first there was no garden of Eden; no forbidden tree: the scene was the whole earth, and the fruit of all the trees was allowed to be eaten.

In giving this example of the strange state of the Bible, it cannot be said I have gone out of my way to seek it, for I have taken the beginning of the book; nor can it be said I have made more of it, than it makes of itself. That there are two stories is as visible to the eye, when attended to, as that there are two chapters, and that they have been written by different persons, nobody knows by whom. If this then is the strange condition the beginning of the Bible is in, it leads, to a just suspicion, that the other parts are no better, and consequently it becomes every man's duty to examine the case. I have done it for myself, and am satisfied that the Bible is *fabulous*.

Perhaps I shall be told in the cant-language of the day, as I have often been told by the Bishop of Llandaff and others of the great and laudable pains, that many pious and learned men have taken to explain the obscure, and reconcile the contradictory, or

as they say, the *seemingly contradictory* passages of the Bible. It is because the Bible needs such an undertaking, that is one of the first causes to suspect it is NOT the word of God: this single reflection, when carried home to the mind, is in itself a volume.

What! does not the Creator of the Universe, the Fountain of all Wisdom, the Origin of all Science, the Author of all knowledge, the God of Order, and of Harmony, know how to write? When we contemplate the vast economy of the creation; when we behold the unerring regularity of the visible solar system, the perfection with which all its several parts revolve, and by corresponding assemblage, form a whole;—when we launch our eye into the boundless ocean of space, and see ourselves surrounded by innumerable worlds, not one of which varies from its appointed place—when we trace the power of the Creator, from a mite to an elephant—from an atom to an universe—can we suppose that the mind that could conceive such a design, and the power that executed it with incomparable perfection, cannot write without inconsistency; or, that a book so written, can be the work of such a power? The writings of Thomas Paine, even of Thomas Paine, need no commentator to explain, expound, arrange, and re-arrange their several parts, to render them intelligible—he can relate a fact, or write an essay, without forgetting in one page what he has written in an other—certainly then, did the God of all perfection condescend to write or dictate a book, that book would be as perfect as himself is perfect: the Bible is not so, and it is confessedly not so, by the attempts to amend it.

Perhaps I shall be told, that though I have produced one instance, I cannot produce another of equal force. One is sufficient to call in question the genuineness or authenticity of any book that pretends to be the word of God; for such a book would, as before said, be as perfect as its author is perfect.

I will, however, advance only four chapters further into the book of Genesis, and produce another example that is sufficient to invalidate the story to which it belongs.

We have all heard of Noah's Flood; and it is impossible to think of the whole human race, men, women, children, and infants (except one family,) deliberately drowning, without feeling a painful sensation; that heart must be a heart of flint that can contemplate such a scene with tranquillity. There is nothing in the ancient mythology, nor in the religion of any people we know of

upon the globe, that records a sentence of their God, or of their Gods, so tremendously severe and merciless. If the story be not true, we blasphemously dishonor God by believing it, and still more so, in forcing, by laws and penalties, that belief upon others. I go now to show from the face of the story, that it carries the evidence of not being true.

I know not if the judge, the jury, and Mr. Erskine, who tried and convicted Williams, ever read the Bible, or know any thing of its contents, and, therefore, I will state the case precisely.

There was no such people as Jews or Israelites, in the time that Noah is said to have lived, and consequently there was no such law as that which is called the Jewish or Mosaic Law. It is according to the Bible, more than six hundred years from the time the flood is said to have happened, to the time of Moses, and consequently the time the flood is said to have happened, was more than six hundred years prior to the law, called the law of Moses, even admitting Moses to have been the giver of that law, of which there is great cause to doubt.

We have here two different epochs, or points of time ; that of the flood, and that of the law of Moses ; the former more than six hundred years prior to the latter. But the maker of the story of the flood, whoever he was, has betrayed himself by blundering, for he has reversed the order of the times. He has told the story, as if the law of Moses was prior to the flood; for he has made God to say to Noah, Genesis, chap. vii. ver. 2, " Of every clean beast, thou shalt take unto thee by sevens, male and his female, and of beasts that are *not clean* by two, the male and his female." This is the Mosaic law, and could only be said after that law was given, not before. There was no such things as beasts clean and unclean in the time of Noah—It is no where said they were created so.—They were only *declared* to be so, *as meats*, by the Mosaic law, and that to the Jews only, and there was no such people as Jews in the time of Noah. This is the blundering condition in which this strange story stands.

When we reflect on a sentence so tremendously severe, as that of consigning the whole human race, eight persons excepted, to deliberate drowning ; a sentence, which represents the Creator in a more merciless character than any of those whom we call Pagans, ever represented the Creator to be, under the figure of any of their deities, we ought at least to suspend our belief of it, on a

comparison of the benificent character of the Creator, with the tremendous severity of the sentence; but when we see the story told with such an evident contradiction of circumstances, we ought to set it down for nothing better than a Jewish fable, told by nobody knows whom, and nobody knows when.

It is a relief to the genuine and sensible soul of man to find the story unfounded. It frees us from two painful sensations at once; that of having hard thoughts of the Creator, on account of the severity of the sentence; and that of sympathising in the horrid tragedy of a drowning world. He who cannot feel the force of what I mean, is not, in my estimation of character, worthy the name of a human being.

I have just said there is great cause to doubt, if the law, called the law of Moses, was given by Moses; the books, called the books of Moses, which contain, among other things, what is called the Mosaic law, are put in front of the Bible, in the manner of a constitution, with a history annexed to it. Had these books been written by Moses, they would undoubtedly have been the oldest books in the Bible, and entitled to be placed first, and the law and the history they contain, would be frequently referred to in the books that follow; but this is not the case. From the time of Othniel, the first of the judges, (Judges, chap. iii. ver. 9,) to the end of the book of Judges, which contains a period of four hundred and ten years, this law, and those books were not in practice, nor known among the Jews, nor are they so much as alluded to throughout the whole of that period. And if the reader will examine the 22d and 23d chapters of the 3d book of Kings, and 34th chapter 2d Chron. he will find that no such law, nor any such books were known in the time of the Jewish monarchy, and that the Jews were Pagans during the whole of that time, and of their judges.

The first time the law, called the law of Moses, made its appearance, was in the time of Josiah, about a thousand years after Moses was dead, it is then said to have been found by accident. The account of this finding, or pretended finding, is given 2d Chron. chap. xxxiv. ver. 14, 15, 16, 18: "Hilkiah the priest *found* the book of the law of the Lord, given by Moses, and Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord, and Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan, and Shaphan carried the book to the king, and Shaphan

told the king, (Josiah,) saying, Hilkiah the priest hath given me a book."

In consequence of this finding, which much resembles that of poor Chatterton finding manuscript poems of Rowley, the Monk, in the Cathedral church at Bristol, or the late finding of manuscripts of Shakspeare in an old chest, (two well known frauds,) Josiah abolished the Pagan religion of the Jews, massacred all the Pagan priests, though he himself had been a Pagan, as the reader will see in the 23d chap. 2d Kings, and thus established in blood, the law that is there called the law of Moses, and instituted a passover in commemoration thereof. The 22d verse speaking of this passover, says, "Surely there was not held such a passover from the days of the judges, that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor the kings of Judah;" and the 25th ver. in speaking of this priest-killing Josiah, says, "*Like unto him, there was no king before him*, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; *neither after him arose there any like him.*" This verse, like the former one, is a general declaration against all the preceding kings without exception. It is also a declaration against all that reigned after him, of which there were four, the whole time of whose reigning makes but twenty-two years and six months, before the Jews were entirely broken up as a nation and their monarchy destroyed. It is, therefore, evident that the law, called the law of Moses, of which the Jews talk so much, was promulgated and established only in the latter time of the Jewish monarchy; and it is very remarkable, that no sooner had they established it than they were a destroyed people, as if they were punished for acting an imposition and affixing the name of the Lord to it, and massacreing their former priests under the pretence of religion. The sum of the history of the Jews is this—they continued to be a nation about a thousand years, they then established a law, which they called the *law of the Lord given by Moses*, and were destroyed. This is not opinion, but historical evidence.

Levi the Jew, who has written an answer to the *Age of Reason*, gives a strange account of the law called the law of Moses.

In speaking of the story of the sun and moon standing still, that the Israelites might cut the throats of all their enemies, and hang all their kings, as told in Joshua, chap. x., he says, "There is also another proof of the reality of this miracle, which is, the appeal

that the author of the book of Joshua makes to the book of Jasher, "*Is not this written in the book of Jasher?* Hence," continues Levi, "It is manifest that the book commonly called the book of Jasher, existed, and was well known at the time the book of Joshua was written; and pray, Sir," continues Levi, "what book do you think this was? *why, no other than the law of Moses!*" Levi, like the Bishop of Llandaff, and many other guess-work commentators, either forgets or does not know, what there is in one part of the Bible, when he is giving his opinion upon another part.

I did not, however, expect to find so much ignorance in a Jew, with respect to the history of his nation, though I might not be surprised at it in a bishop. If Levi will look into the account given in the first chap. 2d book of Sam. of the Amalakite slaying Saul, and bringing the crown and bracelets to David, he will find the following recital, ver. 15, 17, 18: "And David called one of the young men, and said, go near and fall upon him, (the Amalakite,) and he smote him that he died: and David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son; also he bade them teach the children the use of the bow;—*behold it is written in the book of Jasher.*" If the book of Jasher were what Levi calls it, the law of Moses, written by Moses, it is not possible that any thing that David said or did could be written in that law, since Moses died more than five hundred years before David was born; and, on the other hand, admitting the book of Jasher to be the law called the law of Moses; that law must have been written more than five hundred years after Moses was dead, or it could not relate any thing said or done by David. Levi may take which of these cases he pleases, for both are against him.

I am not going in the course of this letter to write a commentary on the Bible. The two instances I have produced, and which are taken from the beginning of the Bible, show the necessity of examining it. It is a book that has been read more, and examined less, than any book that ever existed. Had it come to us an Arabic or Chinese book, and said to have been a sacred book by the people from whom it came, no apology would have been made for the confused and disorderly state it is in. The tales it relates of the Creator would have been censured, and our pity excited for those who believed them. We should have vindicated the goodness of God against such a book, and preached up the disbelief of

it out of reverence to him. Why then do we not act as honourably by the Creator in the one case as we would do in the other. As a Chinese book we would have examined it;—ought we not then to examine it as a Jewish book? The Chinese are a people who have all the appearance of far greater antiquity than the Jews, and in point of permanency, there is no comparison. They are also a people of mild manners and good morals, except where they have been corrupted by European commerce. Yet we take the word of a restless, bloody-minded people, as the Jews of Palestine were, when we would reject the same authority from a better people. We ought to see it is habit and prejudice that have prevented people from examining the Bible. Those of the church of England call it holy, because the Jews called it so, and because custom and certain acts of parliament call it so, and they read it from custom. Dissenters read it for the purpose of doctrinal controversy, and are very fertile in discoveries and inventions. But none of them read it for the pure purpose of information, and of rendering justice to the Creator, by examining if the evidence it contains warrants the belief of its being what it is called. Instead of doing this, they take it blindfolded, and will have it to be the word of God whether it be so or not. For my own part, my belief in the perfection of the Deity will not permit me to believe, that a book so manifestly obscure, disorderly, and contradictory, can be his work. I can write a better book myself. This disbelief in me proceeds from my belief in the Creator. I cannot pin my faith upon the *say so* of Hilkiah, the priest, who said he found it, or any part of it, nor upon Shaphan the scribe, nor upon any priests, nor any scribe or man of the law of the present day.

As to acts of parliament, there are some that say there are witches and wizards; and the persons who made those acts, (it was in the time of James the First,) made also some acts which call the Bible the Holy Scriptures, or Word of God. But acts of parliament decide nothing with respect to God; and as these acts of parliament making were wrong with respect to witches and wizards, they may also be wrong with respect to the book in question.* It is, therefore, necessary that the book be examined;

* It is afflicting to humanity to reflect that, after the blood shed to establish the *divinity* of the Jewish scriptures, it should have become necessary to grant a new *dispensation*, which, through unbelief and conflicting opinions respecting its true construction, has cost as great or greater sacrifices than the former. Catholics, when they had the ascendancy, burnt Protes-

it is our duty to examine it; and to suppress the right of examination is sinful in any government, or in any judge or jury. The Bible makes God to say to Moses, Deut. chap. vii. ver. 2, "And

tants, who, in turn, led Catholics to the stake, and both united in exterminating Dissenters. The Dissenters, when they had the power, pursued the same course. The diabolical act of Calvin, in the burning of Dr. Servetus, is an awful witness of this fact. Servetus suffered two hours in a slow fire before life was extinct. The Dissenters, who escaped from England, had scarcely seated themselves in the wilds of America, before they began to exterminate from the territory they had seized upon, all those who did not profess what they called the *orthodox faith*. Priests, Quakers, and Adamites, were prohibited from entering the territory, on pain of death. By priests, they meant clergymen of the Roman Catholic, if not also of the Protestant or Episcopal persuasion. Their own priests they denominated ministers. These puritans also, particularly in the province of Massachusetts-Bay, put many persons to death on the charge of witchcraft. There is no account, however, of their having burned any alive, as was done in Scotland, about the same period in which the executions took place in Massachusetts-Bay. In England, Sir Matthew Hale, a judge eminent for *extraordinary piety*, condemned two women to death on the same charge.

I doubt, however, if there be any acts of the parliament now in force for inflicting pains and penalties for denying the scriptures to be the word of God, as our *upright* judges seem to rely at this time wholly upon what they call, the common law, to justify the horrid persecutions which are now carried on in England, to the disgrace of a country that boasts so much of its tolerant spirit.

As the common law is derived from the customs of our ancestors, when in a rude and barbarous condition, it is not surprising that many of its injunctions should be opposed to the ideas, which a society in a civilized and refined state, should deem compatible with justice and right. Accordingly we find that government has from time to time annulled some of its most prominent absurdities; such as the trials by ordeal, the wager of battle in case of appeal for murder, under a belief that a supernatural power would interfere to save the innocent and destroy the guilty in such a combat, &c. Yet much remains nearly as ridiculous, that requires a further and more liberal use of the pruning knife.

"In the days of the Stuarts, [A. D. 1670, 22d year of Charles II. See the Republican, vol. 5, p. 22.] William Penn was indicted at Common Law for a riot and breach of the peace on having delivered his sentiments to a congregation of people in Grace-church-street: he told the judge and the jury that Common Law was an abuse, and no law at all; and in spite of the threats, the fines and imprisonments inflicted on his jury, they acquitted him on this plea. William Penn found an honest jury."

The introduction, however, of Christianity, as composing a part of this Common Law, (bad as much of it is,) is proved to be a fraud or misconception of the old Norman French; as I shall show by an extract of a letter from Thomas Jefferson to Major Cartwright, bearing date 5th June, 1824.

For a more full developement of this subject, see Sampson's Anniversary Discourse, before the Historical Society of New-York. EDITOR.

Extract from Jefferson's letter.

"I am glad to find in your book [The English Constitution, produced and illustrated] a formal contradiction, at length, of the judiciary usurpation of legislative power; for such the judges have usurped in their repeated decisions, that *Christianity is a part of the common law.* The proof of the contrary, which you have adduced, is incontrovertible: to wit, that the common law existed while the Anglo-Saxons were yet Pagans; at a time when they had never yet heard the name of Christ pronounced, or knew that such a character had ever existed. But it may amuse you to show when, and by what means, they stole this law in upon us. In a case of Quare Impedit, in the Year Book, 34 Henry VI. fo. 28, [Anno 1458,] a question was made how far the ecclesiastical law was to be respected in a common law court. And Prisot, Chief

when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee, thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them, thou shalt make no covenant with them, *nor show mercy unto them.*" Not all the priests, nor scribes, nor tribunals in the world, nor all the authority of man, shall make me believe that God ever gave such a *Robesperian precept* as that of showing *no mercy;* and consequently it is impossible that I, or any person who believes as reverentially of the Creator as I do, can believe such a book to be the word of God.

Justice, gave his opinion in these words:—'A tiel leis, que ils de saint eglise ont en *ancien scripture*, covient a nous a donner credence: car ceo Commen Ley sur quels touts manners leis sont foddes. Et auxy, Sir, nous sumus obliges de conustre lour ley de saint eglise: et semblablement ils sont obliges de conustre nostre ley—Et, Sir, si poit apperer or a nous que l'evesque adfait come un ordinary fera en tiel cas, adong nous devons ceo adjuger bon, ou auterment nemy,'" &c. ["To such laws as they of holy church have in ancient writing, it behoves us to give credence: for it is that common law upon which all kinds of law are founded; and therefore, Sir, are we bound to know their law of holy church, and in like manner are they obliged to know our laws. And, Sir, if it should appear now to us, that the bishop had done what an ordinary ought to do in like case, then we should adjudge it good, and not otherwise."]—The canons of the church anciently were incorporated with the laws of the land, and of the same authority. See Dr. Henry's Hist. G. Britain. EDITOR.

See S. C. Fitzh. abr. qu. imp. 89. Bro. abr. qu. imp. 12. Finch in his 1st Book, c. 3, is the first afterwards who quotes the case, and mis-states it thus: "'To such laws of the church as have warrant in *Holy Scripture*, our law giveth credence," and cites Prisot; mistranslating '*ancient* Scripture' into '*holy* Scripture;' whereas Prisot palpably says, 'so such laws as those of holy church have in *ancient writing*, it is proper for us to give credence;' to wit—to their *ancient written* laws. This was in 1613, a century and a half after the dictum of Prisot. Wingate, in 1658, erects this false translation into a maxim of the common law, copying the words of Finch, but citing Prisot. Wingate, max. 3, and Sheppard, title 'Religion,' in 1675, copies the same mistranslation, quoting the Y. B. Finch and Wingate. Hale expresses it in these words: 'Christianity is parcel of the law of England'—1 Ventris 293. 3. Keb. 607, but quotes no authority. By these echoings and re-echoings from one to another, it had become so established in 1728, that in the case of the King vs. Woolston, 2. Stra. 834, the court would not suffer it to be debated, whether to write against Christianity was punishable in the temporal cou t at common law. Wood, therefore, 409, ventures still to vary the phrase, and say, 'that all blasphemy and profaneness are offences by the common law;' and cites 2 Stra.—Then Blackstone, in 1763, iv. 59, repeats the words of Hale, that 'Christianity is part of the law of England,' citing Ventris and Strange. And finally, Lord Mansfield, with a little qualification, in Evan's case in 1767, says, that 'the essential principles of *revealed* religion are part of the common law'—thus ingulphing Bible, Testament, and all into the common law, without citing any authority. And thus we find this chain of authorities hanging, link by link, one upon another, and all ultimately on one and the same hook, and *that* a mistranslation of the words '*ancient scripture*,' used by Prisot. Finch quotes Prisot; Wingate does the same; Sheppard quotes Prisot, Finch, and Wingate. Hale cites nobody. The court, in Woolston's case, cites Hale; Wood cite Woolston's case; Blackstone quotes Woolston's case and Hale; and Lord Mansfield, like Hale, ventures it on his own authority. Here I might defy the best read lawyer to produce another scrip of authority for this *judiciary forgery;* and I might go on further to show how some of the Anglo-Saxon priests interpolated into the text of Alfred's laws the 20th, 21st, 22d, and 23d chapters of Exodus, and the 15th of the Acts of the Apostles, from the 23d to the 29th verses; but this would lead my pen, and your patience too far. What a conspiracy this, between church and state!"

There have been, and still are, those, who, whilst they *profess* to believe the Bible to be the word of God, affect to turn it into ridicule. Taking their profession and conduct together, they act blasphemously; because they act as if *God himself* was not to be believed. The case is exceedingly different with respect to the *Age of Reason*. That book is written to show from the Bible itself, that there is abundant matter to suspect it is not the word of God, and that we have been imposed upon, first by Jews, and afterwards by priests and commentators.

Not one of those who have attempted to write answers to the *Age of Reason*, have taken the ground upon which only an answer could be written. The case in question is not upon any point of doctrine, but altogether upon a matter of fact. Is the book called the Bible the word of God, or is it not? If it can be proved to be so, it ought to be believed as such; if not, it ought not to be believed as such. This is the true state of the case. The *Age of Reason* produces evidence to show, and I have in this letter produced additional evidence, that it is not the word of God. Those who take the contrary side, should prove that it is. But this they have not done, nor attempted to do, and consequently they have done nothing to the purpose.

The prosecutors of Williams have shrunk from the point, as the answerers have done. They have availed themselves of prejudice instead of proof. If a writing was produced in a court of judicature, said to be the writing of a certain person, and upon the reality or non-reality of which, some matter at issue depended, the point to be proved would be, that such writing was the writing of such person. Or if the issue depended upon certain words, which some certain person was said to have spoken, the point to be proved would be, that such words were spoken by such person; and Mr. Erskine would contend the case upon this ground. A certain book is said to be the word of God. What is the proof that it is so? for upon this the whole depends; and if it cannot be proved to be so, the prosecution fails for want of evidence.

The prosecution against Williams charges him with publishing a book, entitled *The Age of Reason*, which it says, is an impious blasphemous pamphlet, tending to ridicule and bring into contempt the Holy Scriptures. Nothing is more easy than to find abusive words, and English prosecutions are famous for this species of vulgarity. The charge however, is sophistical; for the charge,

as growing out of the pamphlet, should have stated, not as it now states, to ridicule and bring into contempt the Holy Scriptures, but to show, that the book called the Holy Scriptures are not the Holy Scriptures. It is one thing if I ridicule a work as being written by a certain person; but it is quite a different thing if I write to prove that such work was not written by such person. In the first case, I attack the person through the work; in the other case, I defend the honor of the person against the work. This is what the *Age of Reason* does, and consequently the charge in the indictment is sophistically stated. Every one will admit, that if the Bible be *not* the word of God, we err in believing it to be his word, and ought not to believe it. Certainly, then, the ground the prosecution should take, would be to prove that the Bible is in fact what it is called. But this the prosecution has not done, and cannot do.

In all cases the prior fact must be proved, before the subsequent facts can be admitted in evidence. In a prosecution for adultery, the fact of marriage, which is the prior fact, must be proved, before the facts to prove adultery can be received. If the fact of marriage cannot be proved, adultery cannot be proved; and if the prosecution cannot prove the Bible to be the word of God, the charge of blasphemy is visionary and groundless.

In Turkey they might prove, if the case happened, that a certain book was bought of a certain bookseller, and that the said book was written against the Koran. In Spain and Portugal they might prove, that a certain book was bought of a certain bookseller, and that the said book was written against the infallibility of the Pope. Under the ancient mythology they might have proved, that a certain writing was bought of a certain person, and that the said writing was written against the belief of a plurality of Gods, and in the support of the belief of one God. Socrates was condemned for a work of this kind.

All these are but subsequent facts, and amount to nothing, unless the prior facts be proved. The prior fact, with respect to the first case, is, Is the Koran the word of God? With respect to the second, Is the infallibility of the Pope a truth? With respect to the third, Is the belief of a plurality of gods a true belief? and in like manner with respect to the present prosecution, Is the book called the Bible the word of God? If the present prosecution prove no more than could be proved in any or all of these cases,

it proves only as they do, or as an inquisition would prove; and in this view of the case, the prosecutors ought at least to leave off reviling that infernal institution, the inquisition. The prosecution, however, though it may injure the individual, may promote the cause of truth; because the manner in which it has been conducted, appears a confession to the world, that there is no evidence to prove that the Bible is the word of God. On what authority then do we believe the many strange stories that the Bible tells of God.

This prosecution has been carried on through the medium of what is called a special jury, and the whole of a special jury is nominated by the master of the crown office. Mr. Erskine vaunts himself upon the bill he brought into parliament with respect to trials, for what the government party calls libels. But if in crown prosecutions, the master of the crown office is to continue to appoint the whole special jury, which he does by nominating the forty-eight persons from which the solicitor of each party is to strike out twelve, Mr. Erskine's bill is only vapour and smoke. The root of the grievance lies in the manner of forming the jury, and to this Mr. Erskine's bill applies no remedy.

When the trial of Williams came on, only eleven of the special jurymen appeared, and the trial was adjourned. In cases where the whole number do not appear, it is customary to make up the deficiency by taking jurymen from persons present in court. This, in the law term, is called a *Tales*. Why was not this done in this case? Reason will suggest, that they did not choose to depend on a man accidentally taken. When the trial re-commenced, the whole of the special jury appeared, and Williams was convicted; it is folly to contend a cause where the whole jury is nominated by one of the parties. I will relate a recent case that explains a great deal with respect to special juries in crown prosecutions.

On the trial of Lambert and others, printers and proprietors of the *Morning Chronicle*, for a libel, a special jury was struck, on the prayer of the Attorney-General, who used to be called *Diabolus Regis*, or King's Devil.

Only seven or eight of the special jury appeared, and the Attorney-General not praying a *Tales*, the trial stood over to a future day; when it was to be brought on a second time, the Attorney-General prayed for a new special jury, but as this was not admissible, the original special jury was summoned. Only eight of them

appeared, on which the Attorney-General said, "As I cannot, on a second trial, have a special jury, I will pray a *Tales*." Four persons were then taken from the persons present in court, and added to the eight special jurymen. The jury went out at two o'clock to consult on their verdict, and the judge (Kenyon) understanding they were divided, and likely to be some time in making up their minds, retired from the bench, and went home. At seven, the jury went, attended by an officer of the court, to the Judge's house, and delivered a verdict, "*Guilty of publishing, but with no malicious intention.*" The Judge said, "*I cannot record this verdict: it is no verdict at all.*" The jury withdrew, and after sitting in consultation till five in the morning, brought in a verdict, Not Guilty. Would this have been the case, had they been all special jurymen nominated by the Master of the Crown-office? This is one of the cases that ought to open the eyes of people with respect to the manner of forming special juries.

On the trial of Williams, the Judge prevented the counsel for the defendant proceeding in the defence. The prosecution had selected a number of passages from the Age of Reason, and inserted them in the indictment. The defending counsel was selecting other passages to show, that the passages in the indictment were conclusions drawn from premises, and unfairly separated therefrom in the indictment. The Judge said, *he did not know how to act;* meaning thereby whether to let the counsel proceed in the defence or not, and asked the jury if they wished to hear the passages read which the defending counsel had selected. The jury said NO, and the defending counsel was in consequence silent. Mr. Erskine then, Falstaff like, having all the field to himself, and no enemy at hand, laid about him most heroically, and the jury found the defendant *guilty*. I know not if Mr. Erskine ran out of court and hallooed, huzza for the Bible and the trial by jury.

Robespierre caused a decree to be passed during the trial of Brissot and others, that after a trial had lasted three days, (the whole of which time, in the case of Brissot, was taken up by the prosecuting party,) the judge should ask the jury (who were then a packed jury) if they were satisfied? If the jury said YES, the trial ended, and the jury proceeded to give their verdict, without hearing the defence of the accused party. It needs no depth of wisdom to make an application of this case.

I will now state a case to show that the trial of Williams is not a trial, according to Kenyon's own explanation of law.

On a late trial in London (Selthens *versus* Hoossman) on a policy of insurance, one of the jurymen, Mr. Dunnage, after hearing one side of the case, and without hearing the other side, got up and said, *it was as legal a policy of insurance as ever was written.* The Judge, who was the same as presided on the trial of Williams, replied, *that it was a great misfortune when any gentleman of the jury makes up his mind on a cause before it was finished.* Mr. Erskine, who in that cause was counsel for the defendant, (in this he was against the defendant,) cried out, *it is worse than a misfortune, it is a fault.* The Judge, in his address to the jury in summing up the evidence, expatiated upon, and explained the parts which the law assigned to the counsel on each side, to the witnesses, and to the Judge, and said, "*When all this was done,* and not until then, *it was the business of the jury to declare what the justice of the case was; and that it was extremely rash and imprudent in any man to draw a conclusion before all the premises were laid before them, upon which that conclusion was to be grounded.*" According then to Kenyon's own doctrine, the trial of Williams is an irregular trial, the verdict an irregular verdict, and as such is not recordable.

As to special juries, they are but modern; and were instituted for the purpose of determining cases at *law* between merchants; because, as the method of keeping merchants' accounts differs from that of common tradesmen, and their business, by lying much in foreign bills of exchange, insurance, &c., is of a different description to that of common tradesmen, it might happen that a common jury might not be competent to form a judgment. The law that instituted special juries, makes it necessary that the jurors be *merchants*, or of the degree of *squires.* A special jury in London is generally composed of merchants; and in the country, of men called country squires, that is, fox-hunters, or men qualified to hunt foxes. The one may decide very well upon a case of pounds, shillings, and pence, or of the counting-house: and the other of the jockey-club or the chase. But who would not laugh, that because such men can decide such cases, they can also be jurors upon theology. Talk with some London merchants about scripture, and they will understand you mean *scrip*, and tell you how much it is worth at the Stock Exchange. Ask them about theology, and they will say they know of no such gentleman upon

Change. Tell some country squires of the sun and moon standing still, the one on the top of a hill and the other in a valley, and they will swear it is a lie of one's own making. Tell them that God Almighty ordered a man to make a cake and bake it with a t—d and eat it, and they will say it is one of Dean Swift's blackguard stories. Tell them it is in the Bible, and they will lay a bowl of punch it is not, and leave it to the parson of the parish to decide. Ask *them* also about theology, and they will say, they know of no such an one on the turf. An appeal to such juries serves to bring the Bible into more ridicule than any thing the author of the *Age of Reason* has written; and the manner in which the trial has been conducted shows, that the prosecutor dares not come to the point, nor meet the defence of the defendant. But all other cases apart, on what ground of right, otherwise than on the right assumed by an inquisition, do such prosecutions stand? Religion is a private affair between every man and his Maker, and no tribunal or third party has a right to interfere between them. It is not properly a thing of this world; it is only practised in this world; but its object is in a future world; and it is no otherwise an object of just laws, than for the purpose of protecting the equal rights of all, however various their beliefs may be. If one man choose to believe the book called the Bible to be the word of God, and another, from the convinced idea of the purity and perfection of God, compared with the contradictions the book contains—from the lasciviousness of some of its stories, like that of Lot getting drunk and debauching his two daughters, which is not spoken of as a crime, and for which the most absurd apologies are made—from the immorality of some of its precepts, like that of showing no mercy—and from the total want of evidence on the case, thinks he ought not to believe it to be the word of God, each of them has an equal right; and if the one has the right to give his reasons for believing it to be so, the other has an equal right to give his reasons for believing the *contrary*. Any thing that goes beyond this rule is an inquisition. Mr. Erskine talks of his moral education; Mr. Erskine is very little acquainted with theological subjects, if he does not know there is such a thing as a *sincere* and *religious* belief that the Bible is not the word of God. This is my belief; it is the belief of thousands far more learned than Mr. Erskine; and it is a belief that is every day increasing. It is not infidelity, as Mr. Erskine prophanely and abusively calls it; it is the direct re-

verse of infidelity. It is a pure religious belief, founded on the idea of the perfection of the Creator. If the Bible be the word of God, it needs not the wretched aid of prosecutions to support it; and you might with as much propriety make a law to protect the sunshine, as to protect the Bible, if the Bible, like the sun, be the work of God. We see that God takes good care of the Creation he has made. He suffers no part of it to be extinguished: and he will take the same care of his word, if he ever *gave one.* But men ought to be reverentially careful and suspicious how they ascribe books to him as his *word*, which from this confused condition would dishonor a common scribbler, and against which there is abundant evidence, and every cause to suspect imposition. Leave then the Bible to itself. God will take care of it if he has any thing to do with it, as he takes care of the sun and the moon, which need not your laws for their better protection. As the two instances I have produced, in the beginning of this letter, from the book of Genesis, the one respecting the account called the Mosaic account of the Creation, the other of the Flood, sufficiently show the necessity of examining the Bible, in order to ascertain what degree of evidence there is for receiving or rejecting it as a sacred book; I shall not add more upon that subject; but in order to show Mr. Erskine that there are religious establishments for public worship which make no profession of faith of the books called holy scriptures, nor admit of priests, I will conclude with an account of a society lately began in Paris, and which is very rapidly extending itself.

The society takes the name of Theophilantropes, which would be rendered in English by the word Theophilanthropists, a word compounded of three Greek words, signifying God, Love, and Man. The explanation given to this word is, *Lovers of God and Man*, or *Adorers of God and Friends of Man*, adorateurs de Dieu et amis des hommes. The society proposes to publish each year a volume, the first volume is just published, entitled

RELIGIOUS YEAR OF THE THEOPHILANTHROPISTS;

OR,

ADORERS OF GOD, AND FRIENDS OF MAN.

Being a collection of the discourses, lectures, hymns, and canticles, for all the religious and moral festivals of the Theophilanthropists during the course of the year, whether in their public tem-

ples or in their private families, published by the author of the Manuel of the Theophilanthropists.

The volume of this year, which is the first, contains 214 pages duodecimo.

The following is the table of contents :—

1. Precise history of the Theophilanthropists.
2. Exercises common to all the festivals.
3. Hymn, No. I, God of whom the universe speaks.
4. Discourse upon the existence of God.
5. Ode II. The heavens instruct the earth.
6. Precepts of wisdom, extracted from the book of the Adorateurs.
7. Canticle, No. III. God Creator, soul of nature.
8. Extracts from divers moralists, upon the nature of God, and upon the physical proofs of his existence.
9. Canticle, No. IV. Let us bless at our waking the God who gives us light.
10. Moral thoughts extracted from the Bible.
11. Hymn, No. V. Father of the universe.
12. Contemplation of nature on the first days of the spring.
13. Ode, No VI. Lord in thy glory adorable.
14. Extracts from the moral thoughts of Confucius.
15. Canticle in praise of actions, and thanks for the works of the creation.
16. Continuation from the moral thoughts of Confucius.
17. Hymn, No. VII. All the universe is full of thy magnificence.
18. Extracts from an ancient sage of India upon the duties of families.
19. Upon the spring.
20. Moral thoughts of divers Chinese authors.
21. Canticle, No. VIII. Every thing celebrates the glory of the eternal.
22. Continuation of the moral thoughts of Chinese authors.
23. Invocation for the country.
24. Extracts from the moral thoughts of Theognis.
25. Invocation, Creator of man.
26. Ode, No. IX. Upon Death.
27. Extracts from the book of the Moral Universal, upon happiness.
28. Ode, No. X. Supreme Author of Nature.

INTRODUCTION.

ENTITLED

PRECISE HISTORY OF THE THEOPHILANTHROPISTS.

" Towards the month of Vendimiaire, of the year 5, (Sept. 1796,) there appeared at Paris, a small work, entitled, Manuel of the Theoantropophiles, since called, for the sake of easier pronunciation. Theophilantropes, (Theophilanthropists,) published by C———.

" The worship set forth in this Manuel, of which the origin is from the beginning of the world, was then professed by some families in the silence of domestic life. But no sooner was the Manuel published, than some persons, respectable for their knowledge and their manners, saw, in the formation of a society open to the public, an easy method of spreading moral religion, and of leading by degrees great numbers to the knowledge thereof, who appear to have forgotten it. This consideration ought of itself not to leave indifferent those persons who know that morality and religion, which is the most solid support thereof, are necessary to the maintenance of society, as well as to the happiness of the individual. These considerations determined the families of the Theophilanthropists to unite publicly for the exercise of their worship.

" The first society of this kind opened in the month of Nivose, year 5, (Jan. 1797,) in the street Dennis, No. 34, corner of Lombard-street. The care of conducting this society was undertaken by five fathers of families. They adopted the Manuel of the Theophilanthropists. They agreed to hold their days of public worship on the days corresponding to Sundays, but without making this a hindrance to other societies to choose such other day as they thought more convenient. Soon after this, more societies were opened, of which some celebrate on the decadi, (tenth day,) and others on the Sunday: it was also resolved that the committee should meet one hour each week for the purpose of preparing or examining the discourses and lectures proposed for the next general assembly. That the general assemblies should be called Fetes (festivals) religious and moral. That those festivals should be conducted in principle and form, in a manner, as not to be considered as the festivals of an exclusive worship; and that

in recalling those who might not be attached to any particular worship, those festivals might also be attended as moral exercises by disciples of every sect, and consequently avoid, by scrupulous care, every thing that might make the society appear under the name of a sect. The society adopts neither *rites* nor *priesthood*, and it will never loose sight of the resolution not to advance any thing as a society, inconvenient to any sect or sects, in any time or country, and under any government.

"It will be seen, that it is so much the more easy for the society to keep within this circle, because, that the dogmas of the Theophilanthropists are those upon which all the sects have agreed, that their moral is that upon which there has never been the least dissent; and that the name they have taken, expresses the double end of all the sects, that of leading to the *adoration of God and love of man.*

"The Theophilanthropists do not call themselves the disciples of such or such a man. They avail themselves of the wise precepts that have been transmitted by writers of all countries and in all ages. The reader will find in the discourses, lectures, hymns, and canticles, which the Theophilanthropists have adopted for their religious and moral festivals, and which they present under the title of Annee Religieuse, extracts from moralists, ancient and modern, divested of maxims too severe, or too loosely conceived, or contrary to piety, whether towards God or towards man."

Next follow the dogmas of the Theophilanthropists, or things they profess to believe. These are but two, and are thus expressed, *les Theophilantropes croient a l'existence de Dieu, et a l'immortalite de l'ame.* The Theophilanthropists believe in the existence of God, and the immortality of the soul.

The Manuel of the Theophilanthropists, a small volume of sixty pages, duodecimo, is published separately, as is also their catechism, which is of the same size. The principles of the Theophilanthropists are the same as those published in the first part of the *Age of Reason* in 1793, and in the second part, in 1795. The Theophilanthropists, as a society, are silent upon all the things they do not profess to believe, as the *sacredness* of the books called the Bible, &c. &c. They profess the immortality of the soul, but they are silent on the immortality of the body, or

that which the church calls the resurrection. The author of the *Age of Reason* gives reasons for every thing he *disbelieves*, as well as for those he *believes;* and where this cannot be done with safety, the government is a despotism, and the church an inquisition.

It is more than three years since the first part of the *Age of Reason* was published, and more than a year and a half since the publication of the second part: the bishop of Llandaff undertook to write an answer to the second part; and it was not until after it was known that the author of the *Age of Reason* would reply to the bishop, that the prosecution against the book was set on foot; and which is said to be carried on by some clergy of the English church. If the bishop is one of them, and the object be to prevent an exposure of the numerous and gross errors he has committed in his work, (and which he wrote when report said that Thomas Paine was dead,) it is a confession that he feels the weakness of his cause, and finds himself unable to maintain it. In this case he has given me a triumph I did not seek, and Mr. Erskine, the herald of the prosecution, has proclaimed it.

THOMAS PAINE.

A

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED TO THE SOCIETY OF THEOPHILANTHROPISTS AT PARIS.

RELIGION has two principal enemies, Fanaticism and Infidelity, or that which is called atheism. The first requires to be combated by reason and morality, the other by natural philosophy.

The existence of a God is the first dogma of the Theophilanthropists. It is upon this subject that I solicit your attention; for though it has been often treated of, and that most sublimely, the subject is inexhaustible; and there will always remain something to be said that has not been before advanced. I go, therefore, to open the subject, and to crave your attention to the end.

The universe is the Bible of a true Theophilanthropist. It is there that he reads of God. It is there that the proofs of his existence are to be sought and to be found. As to written or printed books, by whatever name they are called, they are the works of man's hands, and carry no evidence in themselves that God is the author of any of them. It must be in something that man could not make, that we must seek evidence for our belief, and that something is the universe; the true Bible; the inimitable work of God.

Contemplating the universe, the whole system of creation, in this point of light, we shall discover, that all that which is called natural philosophy is properly a divine study. It is the study of God through his works. It is the best study by which we can arrive at a knowledge of his existence, and the only one by which we can gain a glimpse of his perfection.

Do we want to contemplate his power? We see it in the

immensity of the Creation. Do we want to contemplate his wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible WHOLE is governed. Do we want to contemplate his munificence? We see it in the abundance with which he fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate his mercy? We see it in his not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful. In fine, do we want to know what God is? Search not written or printed books, but the scripture called the *Creation*.

It has been the error of the schools to teach astronomy, and all the other sciences, and subjects of natural philosophy, as accomplishments only; whereas they should be taught theologically, or with reference to the Being who is the author of them: for all the principles of science are of divine origin. Man cannot make, or invent, or contrive principles. He can only discover them; and he ought to look through the discovery to the author.

When we examine an extraordinary piece of machinery, an astonishing pile of architecture, a well executed statue, or an highly finished painting, where life and action are imitated, and habit only prevents our mistaking a surface of light and shade for cubical solidity, our ideas are naturally led to think of the extensive genius and talents of the artist. When we study the elements of geometry, we think of Euclid. When we speak of gravitation, we think of Newton. How then is it, that when we study the works of God in the Creation, we stop short, and do not think of God? It is from the error of the schools in having taught those subjects as accomplishments only, and thereby separated the study of them from the being who is the author of them.

The schools have made the study of theology to consist in the study of opinions in written or printed books; whereas theology should be studied in the works or books of the Creation. The study of theology in books of opinions has often produced fanaticism, rancour, and cruelty of temper; and from hence have proceeded the numerous persecutions, the fanatical quarrels, the religious burnings and massacres, that have desolated Europe. But the study of theology in the works of the Creation produces a direct contrary effect. The mind becomes at once enlightened and serene; a copy of the scene it beholds: information and adoration go hand in hand; and all the social faculties become enlarged.

The evil that has resulted from the error of the schools, in teaching natural philosophy as an accomplishment only, has been that of generating in the pupils a species of atheism. Instead of looking through the works of the Creation to the Creator himself, they stop short, and employ the knowledge they acquire to create doubts of his existence. They labour with studied ingenuity to ascribe every thing they behold to innate properties of matter; and jump over all the rest, by saying, that matter is eternal.

Let us examine this subject; it is worth examining; for if we examine it through all its cases, the result will be, that the existence of a superior cause, or that which man calls God, will be discoverable by philosophical principles.

In the first place, admitting matter to have properties, as we see it has, the question still remains, how came matter by those properties? To this they will answer, that matter possessed those properties eternally. This is not solution, but assertion: and to deny it is equally impossible of proof as to assert it. It is then necessary to go further; and, therefore, I say, if there exist a circumstance that is *not* a property of matter, and without which the universe, or, to speak in a limited degree, the solar system, composed of planets and a sun, could not exist a moment; all the arguments of atheism, drawn from properties of matter, and applied to account for the universe, will be overthrown, and the existence of a superior cause, or that which man calls God, becomes discoverable, as is before said, by natural philosophy.

I go now to show that such a circumstance exists, and what it is:

The universe is composed of matter, and, as a system, is sustained by motion. Motion is *not a property* of matter, and without this motion, the solar system could not exist. Were motion a property of matter, that undiscovered and undiscoverable thing called perpetual motion would establish itself. It is because motion is not a property of matter that perpetual motion is an impossibility in the hand of every being but that of the Creator of motion. When the pretenders to atheism can produce perpetual motion, and not till then, they may expect to be credited.

The natural state of matter, as to place, is a state of rest. Motion, or change of place, is the effect of an external cause acting upon matter. As to that faculty of matter that is called gravitation, it is the influence which two or more bodies have reciprocally

on each other to unite and to be at rest. Every thing which has hitherto been discovered, with respect to the motion of the planets in the system, relates only to the laws by which motion acts, and not to the cause of motion. Gravitation, so far from being the cause of motion to the planets that compose the solar system, would be the destruction of the solar system, were revolutionary motion to cease; for as the action of spinning upholds a top, the revolutionary motion upholds the planets in their orbits, and prevents them from gravitating and forming one mass with the sun. In one sense of the word, philosophy knows, and atheism says, that matter is in perpetual motion. But motion here refers to the *state* of matter, and that only on the surface of the earth. It is either decomposition, which is continually destroying the form of bodies of matter, or re-composition, which renews that matter in the same or another form, as the decomposition of animal or vegetable substances enter into the composition of other bodies. But the motion that upholds the solar system is of an entire different kind, and is not a property of matter. It operates also to an entire different effect. It operates to *perpetual preservation*, and to prevent *any change* in the state of the system.

Giving then to matter all the properties which philosophy knows it has, or all that atheism ascribes to it, and can prove, and even supposing matter to be eternal, it will not account for the system of the universe, or of the solar system, because it will not account for motion, and it is motion that preserves it. When, therefore, we discover a circumstance of such immense importance, that without it the universe could not exist, and for which neither matter, nor any, nor all the properties of matter can account; we are by necessity forced into the rational and comfortable belief of the existence of a cause superior to matter, and that cause man calls God.

As to that which is called nature, it is no other than the laws by which motion and action of every kind, with respect to unintelligible matter is regulated. And when we speak of looking through nature up to nature's God, we speak philosophically the same rational language as when we speak of looking through human laws up to the power that ordained them.

God is the power or first cause, nature is the law, and matter is the subject acted upon.

But infidelity, by ascribing every phenomenon to properties of matter, conceives a system for which it cannot account, and yet it pretends to demonstration. It reasons from what it sees on the surface of the earth, but it does not carry itself to the solar system existing by motion. It sees upon the surface a perpetual decomposition and re-composition of matter. It sees that an oak produces an acorn, an acorn an oak, a bird an egg, an egg a bird, and so on. In things of this kind it sees something which it calls natural cause, but none of the causes it sees is the cause of that motion which preserves the solar system.

Let us contemplate this wonderful and stupendous system consisting of matter and existing by motion. It is not matter in a state of rest, nor in a state of decomposition or re-composition. It is matter systematized in perpetual orbicular or circular motion. As a system that motion is the life of it, as animation is life to an animal body; deprive the system of motion, and, as a system, it must expire. Who then breathed into the system the life of motion? What power impelled the planets to move, since motion is not a property of the matter of which they are composed? If we contemplate the immense velocity of this motion, our wonder becomes increased, and our adoration enlarges itself in the same proportion. To instance only one of the planets, that of the earth we inhabit, its distance from the sun, the centre of the orbits of all the planets, is, according to observations of the transit of the planet Venus, about one hundred million miles; consequently, the diameter of the orbit, or circle in which the earth moves round the sun, is double that distance; and the measure of the circumference of the orbit, taken as three times its diameter, is six hundred million miles. The earth performs this voyage in 365 days and some hours, and consequently moves at the rate of more than one million six hundred thousand miles every twenty-four hours.

Where will infidelity, where will atheism find cause for this astonishing velocity of motion, never ceasing, never varying, and which is the preservation of the earth in its orbit? It is not by reasoning from an acorn to an oak, or from any change in the state of matter on the surface of the earth, that this can be accounted for. Its cause is not to be found in matter, nor in any thing we call nature. The atheist who affects to reason, and the fanatic who rejects reason, plunge themselves alike into inextricable difficulties. The one perverts the sublime and enlightening study of

natural philosophy into a deformity of absurdities by not reasoning to the end. The other loses himself in the obscurity of metaphysical theories, and dishonours the Creator, by treating the study of his works with contempt. The one is a half-rational of whom there is some hope, the other a visionary to whom we must be charitable.

When at first thought we think of a Creator, our ideas appear to us undefined and confused; but if we reason philosophically, those ideas can be easily arranged and simplified. *It is a Being whose power is equal to his will.* Observe the nature of the will of man. It is of an infinite quality. We cannot conceive the possibility of limits to the will. Observe on the other hand, how exceedingly limited is his power of acting, compared with the nature of his will. Suppose the power equal to the will, and man would be a God. He would will himself eternal, and be so. He could will a creation, and could make it. In this progressive reasoning, we see in the nature of the will of man, half of that which we conceive of thinking of God; add the other half, and we have the whole idea of a being who could make the universe, and sustain it by perpetual motion; because he could create that motion.

We know nothing of the capacity of the will of animals, but we know a great deal of the difference of their powers. For example, how numerous are the degrees, and how immense is the difference of power from a mite to a man. Since then every thing we see below us shows a progression of power, where is the difficulty in supposing that there is, at the *summit of all things*, a Being in whom an infinity of power unites with the infinity of the will. When this simple idea presents itself to our mind, we have the idea of a perfect Being that man calls God.

It is comfortable to live under the belief of the existence of an infinitely protecting power; and it is an addition to that comfort to know that such a belief is not a mere conceit of the imagination, as many of the theories that are called religious are; nor a belief founded only on tradition or received opinion, but is a belief deducible by the action of reason upon the things that compose the system of the universe: a belief arising out of visible facts: and so demonstrable is the truth of this belief, that if no such belief had existed, the persons who now controvert it, would have been the persons who would have produced and propagated it, because, by beginning to reason, they would have been led on to reason

progressively to the end, and, thereby, have discovered that matter and all the properties it has, will not account for the system of the universe, and that there must necessarily be a superior cause.

It was the excess to which imaginary systems of religion had been carried, and the intolerance, persecutions, burnings, and massacres, they occasioned, that first induced certain persons to propagate infidelity; thinking, that upon the whole it was better not to believe at all, than to believe a multitude of things and complicated creeds, that occasioned so much mischief in the world. But those days are past: persecution has ceased, and the antidote then set up against it has no longer even the shadow of an apology. We profess, and we proclaim in peace, the pure, unmixed, comfortable, and rational belief of a God, as manifested to us in the universe. We do this without any apprehension of that belief being made a cause of persecution as other beliefs have been, or of suffering persecution ourselves. To God, and not to man, are all men to account for their belief.

It has been well observed at the first institution of this society, that the dogmas it professes to believe, are from the commencement of the world; that they are not novelties, but are confessedly the basis of all systems of religion, however numerous and contradictory they may be. All men in the outset of the religion they profess are Theophilanthropists. It is impossible to form any system of religion without building upon those principles, and, therefore, they are not sectarian principles, unless we suppose a sect composed of all the world.

I have said in the course of this discourse, that the study of natural philosophy is a divine study, because it is the study of the works of God in the Creation. If we consider theology upon this ground, what an extensive field of improvement in things both divine and human opens itself before us. All the principles of science are of divine origin. It was not man that invented the principles on which astronomy, and every branch of mathematics are founded and studied. It was not man that gave properties to the circle and triangle. Those principles are eternal and immutable. We see in them the unchangeable nature of the Divinity. We see in them immortality, an immortality existing after the material figures that express those properties are dissolved in dust.

The society is at present in its infancy, and its means are small; but I wish to hold in view the subject I allude to, and instead of

teaching the philosophical branches of learning as ornamental accomplishments only, as they have hitherto been taught, to teach them in a manner that shall combine theological knowledge with scientific instruction; to do this to the best advantage, some instruments will be necessary for the purpose of explanation, of which the society is not yet possessed. But as the views of the society extend to public good, as well as to that of the individual, and as its principles can have no enemies, means may be devised to procure them.

If we unite to the present instruction, a series of lectures on the ground I have mentioned, we shall, in the first place, render theology the most delightful and entertaining of all studies. In the next place we shall give scientific instruction to those who could not otherwise obtain it. The mechanic of every profession will there be taught the mathematical principles necessary to render him a proficient in his art. The cultivator will there see developed, the principles of vegetation: while, at the same time, they will be led to see the hand of God in all these things.

LETTER TO CAMILLE JORDAN,

ONE OF THE COUNCIL OF FIVE HUNDRED,

OCCASIONED BY HIS REPORT ON THE PRIESTS, PUBLIC WORSHIP, AND THE BELLS.

Citizen Representative,

As every thing in your report, relating to what you call worship, connects itself with the books called the Scriptures, I begin with a quotation therefrom. It may serve to give us some idea of the fanciful origin and fabrication of those books. 2 Chronicles, chap. xxxiv. ver. 14, &c. "Hilkiah, the priest, *found* the book of the law of the Lord given by Moses. And Hilkiah, the priest, said to Shaphan, the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord, and Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan. And Shaphan, the scribe, told the king, (Josiah,) saying, Hilkiah, the priest, hath given me a book."

This pretended finding was about a thousand years after the time that Moses is said to have lived. Before this pretended finding, there was no such thing practised or known in the world as that which is called the law of Moses. This being the case, there is every apparent evidence, that the books called the books of Moses (and which make the first part of what are called the Scriptures) are forgeries contrived between a priest and a limb of the law,* Hilkiah, and Shaphan, the scribe, a thousand years after Moses is said to have been dead.

Thus much for the first part of the Bible. Every other part is marked with circumstances equally as suspicious. We ought,

* It happens that Camille Jordan is a limb of the law.

therefore, to be reverentially careful how we ascribe books *as his word*, of which there is no evidence, and against which there is abundant evidence to the contrary, and every cause to suspect imposition.

In your report you speak continually of something by the name of worship, and you confine yourself to speak of one kind only, as if there were but one, and that one was unquestionably true.

The modes of worship are as various as the sects are numerous; and amidst all this variety and multiplicity there is but one article of belief in which every religion in the world agrees. That article has universal sanction. It is the belief of a God, or what the Greeks described by the word *Theism*, and the Latins by that of Deism. Upon this one article have been erected all the different super-structures of creeds and ceremonies continually warring with each other that now exists or ever existed. But the men most and best informed upon the subject of theology, rest themselves upon this universal article, and hold all the various superstructures erected thereon to be at least doubtful, if not altogether artificial.

The intellectual part of religion is a private affair between every man and his Maker, and in which no third party has any right to interfere. The practical part consists in our doing good to each other. But since religion has been made into a trade, the practical part has been made to consist of ceremonies performed by men called priests; and the people have been amused with ceremonial shows, processions, and bells.* By devices of this kind true religion has been banished; and such means have been found out to extract money even from the pockets of the poor, instead of contributing to their relief.

* The precise date of the invention of bells cannot be traced. The ancients, it appears from Martial, Juvenal, Suetonius and others, had an article named tintinuabula, (usually translated bell,) by which the Romans were summoned to their baths and public places. It seems most probable, that the description of bells now used in churches, were invented about the year 400, and generally adopted before the commencement of the seventh century. Previous to their invention, however, sounding brass, and sometimes basins, were used; and to the present day the Greek church have boards, or iron plates, full of holes, which they strike with a hammer, or mallet, to summon the priests and others to divine service. We may also remark, that in our own country, it was the custom in monasteries to visit every person's cell early in the morning, and knock on the door with a similar instrument, called the wakening mallet—doubtless no very pleasing intrusion on the slumbers of the Monks.

But, the use of bells having been established, it was found that devils were terrified at the sound, and slunk in haste away; in consequence of which it was thought necessary to baptize them in a solemn manner, which appears to

No man ought to make a living by religion. It is dishonest so to do. Religion is not an act that can be performed by proxy. One person cannot act religion for another. Every person must perform it for himself: and all that a priest can do is to take from him, he wants nothing but his money, and then to riot in the spoil and laugh at his credulity.

The only people, as a professional sect of Christians, who provide for the poor of their society, are people known by the name of Quakers. Those men have no priests. They assemble quietly in their places of meeting, and do not disturb their neighbours with shows and noise of bells. Religion does not unite itself to show and noise. True religion is without either. Where there is both there is no true religion.

The first object for inquiry in all cases, more especially in matters of religious concern, is TRUTH. We ought to inquire into the truth of whatever we are taught to believe, and it is certain that the books called the Scriptures stand, in this respect, in more than a doubtful predicament. They have been held in existence, and in a sort of credit among the common class of people, by art, terror, and persecution. They have little or no credit among the enlightened part, but they have been made the means

have been first done by Pope John XII. A. D. 968. A record of this practice still exists in the Tom of Lincoln, and the great Tom at Oxford, &c.

Having thus laid the foundation of superstitious veneration, in the hearts of the common people, it cannot be a matter of surprise, that they were soon used at rejoicings, and high festivals in the church (for the purpose of driving away any evil spirit which might be in the neighborhood) as well as on the arrival of any great personage, on which occasion the usual fee was one penny.

One other custom remains to be explained, viz. tolling bell on the occasion of any person's death, a custom which, in the manner now practised, is totally different from its original institution. It appears to have been used as early as the 7th century, when bells were first generally used and to have been denominated the soul bell, (as it signified the departing of the soul,) as also, the passing bell. Thus Wheatly tells us, "Our church, in imitation of the Saints of former ages, calls in the Minister and others who are at hand, to assist their brother in his last extremity; in order to this, she directs a bell should be tolled when any one is *passing* out of this life." Durand also says—"When any one is *dying*, bells must be tolled, that the people may put up their prayers for him; let this be done twice for a woman, and thrice for a man. If for a clergyman, as many times as he had orders; and, at the conclusion, a peal on all the bells, to distinguish the quality of the person for whom the people are to put up their prayers."—From these passages, it appears evident that the bell was to be tolled *before* a person's decease rather than *after*, as at the present day; and that the object was to obtain the prayers of all who heard it, for the repose of the soul of their departing neighbour. At first, when the tolling took place after the person's decease, it was deemed superstitious, and was partially disused, which was found materially to affect the revenue of the church. The priesthood having removed the objection, bells were again tolled, upon payment of the customary fees. *English Paper.*

of encumbering the world with a numerous priesthood, who have fattened on the labour of the people, and consumed the sustenance that ought to be applied to the widows and the poor.

It is a want of feeling to talk of priests and bells whilst so many infants are perishing in the hospitals, and aged and infirm poor in the streets, from the want of necessaries. The abundance that France produces is sufficient for every want, if rightly applied; but priests and bells, like articles of luxury, ought to be the least articles of consideration.

We talk of religion. Let us talk of truth; for that which is not truth, is not worthy the name of religion.

We see different parts of the world overspread with different books, each of which, though contradictory to the other, is said by its partisans, to be of divine origin, and is made a rule of faith and practice. In countries under despotic governments, where inquiry is always forbidden, the people are condemned to believe as they have been taught by their priests. This was for many centuries the case in France: but this link in the chain of slavery, is happily broken by the revolution; and, that it may never be rivetted again, let us employ a part of the liberty we enjoy in scrutinizing into the truth. Let us leave behind us some monument, that we have made the cause and honour of our Creator an object of our care. If we have been imposed upon by the terrors of government and the artifice of priests in matters of religion, let us do justice to our Creator by examining into the case. His name is too sacred to be affixed to any thing which is fabulous; and it is our duty to inquire whether we believe, or encourage the people to believe, in fables or in facts.

It would be a project worthy the situation we are in, to invite in inquiry of this kind. We have committees for various objects; and, among others, a committee for bells. We have institutions, academies, and societies for various purposes; but we have none for inquiring into historical truth in matters of religious concern.

They show us certain books which they call the Holy Scriptures, the word of God, and other names of that kind; but we ought to know what evidence there is for our believing them to be so, and at what time they originated and in what manner. We know that men could make books, and we know that artifice and superstition could give them a name; could call them sacred. But we ought to be careful that the name of our Creator be not

abused. Let then all the evidence with respect to those books be made a subject of inquiry. If there be evidence to warrant our belief of them, let us encourage the propagation of it: but if not, let us be careful not to promote the cause of delusion and falsehood.

I have already spoken of the Quakers—that they have no priests, no bells—and that they are remarkable for their care of the poor of their society. They are equally as remarkable for the education of their children. I am a descendant of a family of that profession; my father was a Quaker; and I presume I may be admitted an evidence of what I assert. The seeds of good principles, and the literary means of advancement in the world, are laid in early life. Instead, therefore, of consuming the substance of the nation upon priests, whose life at best is a life of idleness, let us think of providing for the education of those who have not the means of doing it themselves. One good schoolmaster is of more use than a hundred priests.

If we look back at what was the condition of France under the *ancient regime*, we cannot acquit the priests of corrupting the morals of the nation. Their pretended celibacy led them to carry debauchery and domestic infidelity into every family where they could gain admission; and their blasphemous pretensions to forgive sins, encouraged the commission of them. Why has the Revolution of France been stained with crimes which the Revolution of the United States of America was not? Men are physically the same in all countries; it is education that makes them different. Accustom a people to believe that priests, or any other class of men can forgive sins, and you will have sins in abundance.

I come now to speak more particularly to the object of your report.

You claim a privilege incompatible with the constitution and with rights. The constitution protects equally, as it ought to do, every profession of religion; it gives no exclusive privilege to any. The churches are the common property of all the people; they are national goods, and cannot be given exclusively to any one profession, because the right does not exist of giving to any one that which appertains to all. It would be consistent with right that the churches be sold, and the money arising therefrom be invested as a fund for the education of children of poor parents of every profession, and, if more than sufficient for this purpose,

that the surplus be appropriated to the support of the aged poor. After this, every profession can erect its own place of worship, if it choose—support its own priests, if it choose to have any—or perform its worship without priests, as the Quakers do.

As to bells, they are a public nuisance. If one profession is to have bells, and another has the right to use the instruments of the same kind, or any other noisy instrument. Some may choose to meet at the sound of cannon, another at the beat of drum, another at the sound of trumpets, and so on, until the whole becomes a scene of general confusion. But if we permit ourselves to think of the state of the sick, and the many sleepless nights and days they undergo, we shall feel the impropriety of increasing their distress by the noise of bells, or any other noisy instruments.

Quiet and private domestic devotion neither offends nor incommodes any body; and the constitution has wisely guarded against the use of externals. Bells come under this description, and public processions still more so—Streets and highways are for the accommodation of persons following their several occupations, and no sectary has a right to incommode them—If any one has, every other has the same; and the meeting of various and contraditory processions would be tumultuous. Those who formed the constitution had wisely reflected upon these cases; and, whilst they were careful to reserve the equal right of every one, they restrained every one from giving offence, or incommoding another.

Men who, through a long and tumultuous scene, have lived in retirement as you have done, may think, when they arrive at power, that nothing is more easy than to put the world to rights in an instant; they form to themselves gay ideas at the success of their projects; but they forget to contemplate the difficulties that attend them, and the dangers with which they are pregnant. Alas! nothing is so easy as to deceive one's self. Did all men think, as you think, or as you say, your plan would need no advocate, because it would have no opposer; but there are millions who think differently to you, and who are determined to be neither the dupes nor the slaves of error or design.

It is your good fortune to arrive at power, when the sunshine of prosperity is breathing forth after a long and stormy night. The firmness of your colleagues, and of those you have succeeded—the unabated energy of the Directory, and the unequalled bravery

of the armies of the Republic, have made the way smooth and easy to you. If you look back at the difficulties that existed when the constitution commenced, you cannot but be confounded with admiration at the difference between that time and now. At that moment the Directory were placed like the forlorn hope of an army, but you were in safe retirement. They occupied the post of honourable danger, and they have merited well of their country.

You talk of justice and benevolence, but you begin at the wrong end. The defenders of your country, and the deplorable state of the poor, are objects of prior consideration to priests and bells and gaudy processions.

You talk of peace, but your manner of talking of it embarrasses the Directory in making it, and serves to prevent it. Had you been an actor in all the scenes of government from its commencement, you would have been too well informed to have brought forward projects that operate to encourage the enemy. When you arrived at a share in the government, you found every thing tending to a prosperous issue. A series of victories unequalled in the world, and in the obtaining of which you had no share, preceded your arrival. Every enemy but one was subdued; and that one, (the Hanoverian government of England,) deprived of every hope, and a bankrupt in all its resources, was sueing for peace. In such a state of things, no new question that might tend to agitate and anarchize the interior, ought to have had place; and the project you propose, tends directly to that end.

Whilst France was a monarchy, and under the government of those things called kings and priests, England could always defeat her; but since France has RISEN TO BE A REPUBLIC, the GOVERNMENT OF ENGLAND crouches beneath her, so great is the difference between a government of kings and priests, and that which is founded on the system of representation. But, could the government of England find a way, under the sanction of your report, to inundate France with a flood of emigrant priests, she would find also the way to domineer as before; she would retrieve her shattered finances at your expence, and the ringing of bells would be the tocsin of your downfall.

Did peace consist in nothing but the cessation of war, it would not be difficult; but the terms are yet to be arranged; and those terms will be better or worse, in proportion as France and her councils be united or divided. That the government of England

counts much upon your report, and upon others of a similar tendency, is what the writer of this letter, who knows that government well, has no doubt. You are but new on the theatre of government, and you ought to suspect yourself of misjudging; the experience of those who have gone before you, should be of some service to you.

But if, in consequence of such measures as you propose, you put it out of the power of the Directory to make a good peace, and to accept of terms you would afterwards reprobate, it is yourselves that must bear the censure.

You conclude your report by the following address to your colleagues:—

"Let us hasten, representatives of the people! to affix to these tutelary laws the seal of our unanimous approbation. All our fellow-citizens will learn to cherish political liberty from the enjoyment of religious liberty: you will have broken the most powerful arm of your enemies; you will have surrounded this assembly with the most impregnant rampart—confidence, and the people's love. O! my colleagues! how desirable is that popularity which is the offspring of good laws! What a consolation it will be to us hereafter, when returned to our own fire-sides, to hear from the mouths of our fellow-citizens, these simple expressions—*Blessings reward you, men of peace! you have restored to us our temples—our ministers—the liberty of adoring the God of our fathers: you have recalled harmony to our families—morality to our hearts: you have made us adore the legislature and respect all its laws!*"

Is it possible, citizen representative, that you can be serious in this address? Were the lives of the priests under the *ancient regime* such as to justify any thing you say of them? Where not all France convinced of their immorality? Were they not considered as the patrons of debauchery and domestic infidelity, and not as the patrons of morals? What was their pretended celibacy but perpetual adultery? What was their blasphemous pretentions to forgive sins, but an encouragement to the commission of them, and a love for their own? Do you want to lead again into France all the vices of which they have been the patrons, and to overspread the republic with English pensioners! It is cheaper to corrupt than to conquer; and the English government, unable to

conquer; will stoop to corrupt. Arrogance and meanness, though in appearance opposite, are vices of the same heart.

Instead of concluding in the manner you have done, you ought rather to have said,

"O! my colleagues! we are arrived at a glorious period—a period that promises more than we could have expected, and all that we could have wished. Let us hasten to take into consideration the honours and rewards due to our brave defenders. Let us hasten to give encouragement to agriculture and manufactures, that commerce may reinstate itself, and our people have employment. Let us review the condition of the suffering poor, and wipe from our country the reproach of forgetting them. Let us devise means to establish schools of instruction, that we may banish the ignorance that the ancient regime of kings and priests had spread among the people.—Let us propagate morality, unfettered by superstition—Let us cultivate justice and benevolence, that the God of our fathers may bless us. The helpless infant and the aged poor cry to us to remember them—Let not wretchedness be seen in our streets—Let France exhibit to the world the glorious example of expelling ignorance and misery together.

"Let these, my virtuous colleagues, be the subject of our care, that, when we return among our fellow-citizens, they may say, *Worthy representatives! you have done well. You have done justice and honour to our brave defenders. You have encouraged agriculture—cherished our decayed manufactures—given new life to commerce, and employment to our people. You have removed from our country the reproach of forgetting the poor—You have caused the cry of the orphan to cease—You have wiped the tear from the eye of the suffering mother—You have given comfort to the aged and infirm—You have penetrated into the gloomy recesses of wretchedness, and have banished it. Welcome among us, ye brave and virtuous representatives! and may your example be followed by your successors!*"

THOMAS PAINE.

Paris, 1797.

AN

EXAMINATION

OF THE

PASSAGES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT,

QUOTED FROM THE OLD,

AND CALLED

PROPHECIES CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

AN ESSAY ON DREAM,

ALSO,

An Appendix,

CONTAINING THE

CONTRADICTORY DOCTRINES BETWEEN MATTHEW AND MARK;

AND MY

PRIVATE THOUGHTS ON A FUTURE STATE.

PREFACE.

TO THE MINISTERS AND PREACHERS OF ALL DENOMINATIONS OF RELIGION.

It is the duty of every man, as far as his ability extends, to detect and expose delusion and error. But nature has not given to every one a talent for the purpose; and among those to whom such a talent is given, there is often a want of disposition or of courage to do it.

The world, or more properly speaking, that small part of it called Christendom, or the Christian World, has been amused for more than a thousand years with accounts of Prophecies in the Old Testament, about the coming of the person called Jesus Christ, and thousands of sermons have been preached, and volumes written, to make man believe it.

In the following treatise I have examined all the passages in the New Testament, quoted from the Old, and called prophecies concerning Jesus Christ, and I find no such thing as a prophecy of any such person, and I deny there are any. The passages all relate to circumstances the Jewish nation was in at the time they were written or spoken, and not to any thing that was or was not to happen in the world several hundred years afterwards; and I have shown what the circumstances were, to which the passages apply or refer. I have given chapter and verse for every thing I have said, and have not gone out of the books of the Old and New Testament for evidence that the passages are not prophecies of the person called Jesus Christ.

The prejudice of unfounded belief, often degenerates into the prejudice of custom, and becomes, at last, rank hypocrisy. When men, from custom or fashion, or any worldly motive, profess or pretend to believe what they do not believe, nor can give any reason for believing, they unship the helm of their morality, and being no longer honest to their own minds, they feel no moral difficulty in being unjust to others. It is from the influence of this vice, hypocrisy, that we see so many Church and Meeting-going professors and pretenders to religion, so full of trick and deceit in their dealings, and so loose in the performance of their engagements, that they are not to be trusted further than the laws of the country will bind them. Morality has no hold on their minds, no restraint on their actions.

One set of preachers make salvation to consist in believing. They tell their congregations, that if they believe in Christ, their sins shall be forgiven. This, in the first place, is an encouragement to sin, in a similar manner as when a prodigal young fellow is told his father will pay all his debts, he runs into debt the faster, and becomes the more extravagant: Daddy, says he, pays all, and on he goes. Just so in the other case, *Christ pays all*, and on goes the sinner.

In the next place, the doctrine these men preach is not true. The New Testament rests itself for credulity and testimony on what are called prophecies in the Old Testament, of the person called Jesus Christ; and if there are no such thing as prophecies of any such person in the Old Testament, the New Testament is a forgery of the councils of Nice and Laodocia, and the faith founded thereon, delusion and falsehood.*

Another set of preachers tell their congregations that God predestinated and selected from all eternity, a certain number to be saved, and a certain number to be damned eternally. If this were true, *the day of Judgment* IS PAST: *their preaching* is in vain, and they had better work at some useful calling for their livelihood.

This doctrine, also, like the former. hath a direct tendency to demoralize mankind. Can a bad man be reformed by telling him,

* The councils of Nice and Laodocia were held about 350 years after the time Christ is said to have lived; and the books that now compose the New Testament, were then voted for by YEAS and NAYS, as we now vote a law. A great many that were offered had a majority of *nays*, and were rejected. This is the way the New Testament came into being.

that if he is one of those who was decreed to be damned before he was born, his reformation will do him no good; and if he was decreed to be saved, he will be saved whether he believes it or not; for this is the result of the doctrine. Such preaching, and such preachers, do injury to the moral world. They had better be at the plough.

As in my political works my motive and object have been to give man an elevated sense of his own character, and free him from the slavish and superstitious absurdity of monarchy and hereditary government, so in my publications on religious subjects my endeavours have been directed to bring man to a right use of the reason that God has given him; to impress on him the great principles of divine morality, justice, mercy, and a benevolent disposition to all men, and to all creatures, and to inspire in him a spirit of trust, confidence and consolation in his Creator, unshackled by the fables of books pretending to be *the word of God.*

THOMAS PAINE.

AN ESSAY ON DREAMS.

As a great deal is said in the New Testament about dreams, it is first necessary to explain the nature of dream, and to show by what operation of the mind a dream is produced during sleep. When this is understood we shall be the better enabled to judge whether any reliance can be placed upon them; and, consequently, whether the several matters in the New Testament related of dreams deserve the credit which the writers of that book and priests and commentators ascribe to them.

In order to understand the nature of dreams, or of that which passes in ideal vision during a state of sleep, it is first necessary to understand the composition and decomposition of the human mind.

The three great faculties of the mind are IMAGINATION, JUDGEMENT and MEMORY. Every action of the mind comes under one or the other of these faculties. In a state of wakefulness, as in the day-time, these three faculties are all active; but that is seldom the case in sleep, and never perfectly: and this is the cause that our dreams are not so regular and rational as our waking thoughts.

The seat of that collection of powers or faculties, that constitute what is called the mind, is in the brain. There is not, and cannot be, any visible demonstration of this anatomically, but accidents happening to living persons, show it to be so. An injury done to the brain by a fracture of the skull, will sometimes change a wise man into a childish idiot: a being without mind. But so careful has nature been of that *sanctum sanctorum* of man, the brain, that of all the external accidents to which humanity is subject, this happens the most seldom. But we often see it happening by long and habitual intemperance.

Whether those three faculties occupy distinct apartments of the brain, is known only to that Almighty power that formed and organized it. We can see the external effects of muscular motion in all the members of the body, though its *primum mobile*, or first moving cause, is unknown to man. Our external motions are sometimes the effect of intention, and sometimes not. If we are sitting and intend to rise, or standing and intend to set, or to walk, the limbs obey that intention as if they heard the order given. But we make a thousand motions every day, and that as well waking as sleeping, that have no prior intention to direct them. Each member acts as if it had a will or mind of its own. Man governs the whole when he pleases to govern, but in the interims the several parts, like little suburbs, govern themselves without consulting the sovereign.

But all these motions, whatever be the generating cause, are external and visible. But with respect to the brain, no ocular observation can be made upon it. All is mystery; all is darkness in that womb of thought.

Whether the brain is a mass of matter in continual rest; whether it has a vibrating pulsative motion, or a heaving and falling motion, like matter in fermentation; whether different parts of the brain have different motions according to the faculty that is employed, be it the imagination, the judgment, or the memory, man knows nothing of it. He knows not the cause of his own wit. His own brain conceals it from him.

Comparing invisible by visible things, as metaphysical can sometimes be compared to physical things, the operations of those distinct and several faculties have some resemblance to the mechanism of a watch. The main spring which puts all in motion, corresponds to the imagination; the pendulum or balance, which corrects and regulates that motion, corresponds to the judgment; and the hand and dial, like the memory, record the operations.

Now in proportion as these several faculties sleep, slumber, or keep awake, during the continuance of a dream, in that proportion the dream will be reasonable or frantic, remembered or forgotten.

If there is any faculty in mental man that never sleeps, it is that volatile thing the imagination: the case is different with the judgment and memory. The sedate and sober constitution of the judgment easily disposes it to rest; and as to the memory, it records in silence, and is active only when it is called upon.

That the judgment soon goes to sleep may be perceived by our sometimes beginning to dream before we are fully asleep ourselves. Some random thought runs in the mind, and we start, as it were, into recollection that we are dreaming between sleeping and waking.

If the judgment sleeps whilst the imagination keeps awake, the dream will be a riotous assemblage of mis-shapen images and ranting ideas, and the more active the imagination is, the wilder the dream will be. The most inconsistent and the most impossible things will appear right; because that faculty, whose province it is to keep order, is in a state of absence. The master of the school is gone out, and the boys are in an uproar.

If the memory sleeps, we shall have no other knowledge of the dream than that we have dreamt, without knowing what it was about. In this case it is sensation, rather than recollection, that acts. The dream has given us some sense of pain or trouble, and we feel it as a hurt, rather than remember it as a vision.

If memory only slumbers, we shall have a faint remembrance of the dream, and after a few minutes it will sometimes happen that the principal passages of the dream will occur to us more fully. The cause of this is, that the memory will sometimes continue slumbering or sleeping after we are awake ourselves, and that so fully, that it may, and sometimes does happen, that we do not immediately recollect where we are, nor what we have been about, or have to do. But when the memory starts into wakefulness, it brings the knowledge of these things back upon us, like a flood of light, and sometimes the dream with it.

But the most curious circumstance of the mind in a state of dream, is the power it has to become the agent of every person, character and thing, of which it dreams. It carries on conversation with several, asks questions, hears answers, gives and receives information, and it acts all these parts itself.

But however various and eccentric the imagination may be in the creation of images and ideas, it cannot supply the place of memory, with respect to things that are forgotten when we are awake. For example, if we have forgotten the name of a person, and dream of seeing him and asking him his name, he cannot tell it; for it is ourselves asking ourselves the question.

But though the imagination cannot supply the place of real memory, it has the wild faculty of counterfeiting memory. It

dreams of persons it never knew, and talks with them as if it remembered them as old acquaintances. It relates circumstances that never happened, and tells them as if they had happened. It goes to places that never existed, and knows where all the streets and houses are, as if it had been there before. The scenes it creates often appear as scenes remembered. It will sometimes act a dream within a dream, and, in the delusion of dreaming, tell a dream it never dreamed, and tell it as if it was from memory. It may also be remarked, that the imagination in a dream, has no idea of time, *as time*. It counts only by circumstances; and if a succession of circumstances pass in a dream that would require a great length of time to accomplish them, it will appear to the dreamer that a length of time equal thereto has passed also.

As this is the state of the mind in dream, it may rationally be said that every person is mad once in twenty-four hours, for were he to act in the day as he dreams in the night, he would be confined for a lunatic. In a state of wakefulness, those three faculties being all alive, and acting in union, constitute the rational man. In dreams it is otherwise, and, therefore, that state which is called insanity, appears to be no other than a disunion of those faculties, and a cessation of the judgment during wakefulness, that we so often experience during sleep; and idiocity, into which some persons have fallen, is that cessation of all the faculties of which we can be sensible when we happen to wake before our memory.

In this view of the mind, how absurd is it to place reliance upon dreams, and how much more absurd to make them a foundation for religion; yet the belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, begotten by the Holy Ghost, a being never heard of before, stands on the story of an old man's dream. "*And behold the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not thou to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that hich is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.*"—Matt. chap. i. verse 20.

After this we have the childish stories of three or four other dreams? about Joseph going into Egypt; about his coming back again; about this, and about that, and this story of dreams has thrown Europe into a dream for more than a thousand years. All the efforts that nature, reason, and conscience have made to awaken man from it, have been ascribed by priestcraft and superstition

to the workings of the devil, and had it not been for the American revolution, which, by establishing the *universal right of conscience*, first opened the way to free discussion, and for the French revolution which followed, this religion of dreams had continued to be preached, and that after it had ceased to be believed. Those who preached it and did not believe it, still believed the delusion necessary. They were not bold enough to be honest, nor honest enough to be bold.

[Every new religion, like a new play, requires a new apparatus of dresses and machinery, to fit the new characters it creates. The story of Christ in the New Testament brings a new being upon the stage, which it calls the Holy Ghost; and the story of Abraham, the father of the Jews, in the Old Testament, gives existence to a new order of beings it calls Angels.—There was no Holy Ghost before the time of Christ, nor Angels before the time of Abraham.—We hear nothing of these winged gentlemen, till more than two thousand years, according to the Bible chronology, from the time they say the heavens, the earth, and all therein were made:—After this, they hop about as thick as birds in a grove:—The first we hear of, pays his addresses to Hagar in the wilderness; then three of them visit Sarah; another wrestles a fall with Jacob; and these birds of passage having found their way to earth and back, are continually coming and going. They eat and drink, and up again to heaven.—What they do with the food they carry away, the Bible does not tell us.—Perhaps they do as the birds do. * * *

One would think that a system loaded with such gross and vulgar absurdities as scripture religion is, could never have obtained credit; yet we have seen what priestcraft and fanaticism could do, and credulity believe.

From angels in the old Testament we get to prophets, to witches, to seers of visions, and dreamers of dreams, and sometimes we are told, as in 2 Sam. chap. ix. ver. 15, that God whispers in the ear—At other times we are not told how the impulse was given, or whether sleeping or waking—In 2 Sam. chap. xxiv. ver. 1, it is said, "*And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say go number Israel and Judah.*"—And in 1 Chro. chap. xxi. ver. 1, when the same story is again related, it is said, "*and Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel.*"

Whether this was done sleeping or waking, we are not told, but it seems that David, whom they call "a man after God's own heart," did not know by what spirit he was moved; and as to the men called inspired penmen, they agree so well about the matter, that in one book they say that it was God, and in the other that it was the Devil.

The idea that writers of the Old Testament had of a God was boisterous, contemptible, and vulgar.—They make him the Mars of the Jews, the fighting God of Israel, the conjuring God of their Priests and Prophets.—They tell as many fables of him as the Greeks told of Hercules. * * * *

They make their God to say exultingly, "*I will get me honour upon Pharoah and upon his Host, upon his Chariots and upon his Horsemen.*"—And that he may keep his word, they make him set a trap in the Red Sea, in the dead of the night, for Pharoah, his host, and his horses, and drown them as a rat-catcher would do so many rats—Great honour indeed! the story of Jack the giant-killer is better told!

They pit him against the Egyptian magicians to conjure with him, the three first essays are a dead match—Each party turns his rod into a serpent, the rivers into blood, and creates frogs; but upon the fourth, the God of the Israelites obtains the laurel, he covers them all over with lice!—The Egyptian magicians cannot do the same, and this lousy triumph proclaims the victory!

They make their God to rain fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and belch fire and smoke upon mount Sinai, as if he was the Pluto of the lower regions. They make him salt up Lot's wife like pickled pork; they make him pass like Shakspeare's Queen Mab into the brain of their priests, prophets, and prophetesses, and tickle them into dreams, and after making him play all kind of tricks they confound him with Satan, and leave us at a loss to know what God they meant!

This is the descriptive God of the Old Testament; and as to the New, though the authors of it have varied the scene, they have continued the vulgarity.

Is man ever to be the dupe of priestcraft, the slave of superstition? Is he never to have just ideas of his Creator? Is it better not to belief there is a God, than to believe of him falsely. When we behold the mighty universe that surrounds us, and dart our contemplation into the eternity of space, filled with innumerable orbs,

revolving in eternal harmony, how paltry must the tales of the Old and New Testaments, prophanely called the word of God, appear to thoughtful man! The stupendous wisdom and unerring order, that reign and govern throughout this wondrous whole, and call us to reflection, *put to shame the Bible!*—The God of eternity and of all that is real, is not the God of passing dreams, and shadows of man's imagination! The God of truth is not the God of fable; the belief of a God begotten and a God crucified, is a God blasphemed——It is making a profane use of reason.]*

I shall conclude this Essay on Dream with the two first verses of the 34th chapter of Ecclesiasticus, one of the books of the Aprocrypha.

"*The hopes of a man void of understanding are vain and false; and dreams lift up fools—Whoso regardeth dreams is like him that catcheth at a shadow, and followeth after the wind.*"

I now proceed to an examination of the passages in the Bible, called prophecies of the coming of Christ, and to show there are no prophecies of any such person. That the passages clandestinely styled prophecies are not prophecies, and that they refer to circumstances the Jewish nation was in at the time they were written or spoken, and not to any distance of future time or person.

* Mr. Paine must have been in an ill humour when he wrote the passage inclosed in crotchets, commencing at page 223: and probably on reviewing it, and discovering exceptionable clauses, was induced to reject the whole, as it does not appear in the edition published by himself. But having obtained the original in the hand writing of Mr. P. and deeming some of the remarks worthy of being preserved, I have thought proper to restore the passage, with the exception of the objectional parts.—EDITOR.

AN

EXAMINATION

OF THE

PASSAGES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT,

QUOTED FROM THE OLD, AND CALLED PROPHECIES OF THE COMING OF

JESUS CHRIST.

[THIS work was first published by Mr. Paine, at New-York, in 1807, and was the last of his writings edited by himself. It is evidently extracted from his answer to the bishop of Llandaff, or from his third part of the Age of Reason, both of which it appears by his will, he left in manuscript. The term, "*The Bishop*," occurs in this examination six times without designating what bishop is meant. Of all the replies to his second part of the Age of Reason, that of bishop Watson was the only one to which he paid particular attention; and he is, no doubt, the person here alluded to. Bishop Watson's apology for the Bible had been published some years before Mr. P. left France, and the latter composed his answer to it, and also his third part of the Age of Reason, while in that country.

When Mr. Paine arrived in America, and found that liberal opinions on religion were in disrepute, through the influence of hypocrisy and superstition, he declined publishing the entire of the works which he had prepared; observing that "An author might lose the credit he had acquired by writing too much." He however gave to the public the examination before us, in a pamphlet form. But the apathy which appeared to prevail at that time in regard to religious inquiry, fully determined him to discontinue the publication of his theological writings. In this case, taking only a portion of one of the works before mentioned, he chose a title adapted to the particular part selected.]

The passages called Prophecies of, or concerning, Jesus Christ, in the Old Testament, may be classed under the two following heads :—

First those referred to in the four books of the New Testament, called the four Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Secondly, those which translators and commentators have, of their own imagination, erected into prophecies, and dubbed with that title at the head of the several chapters of the Old Testament. Of these it is scarcely worth while to waste time, ink, and paper upon ; I shall, therefore, confine myself chiefly to those referred to in the aforesaid four books of the New Testament. If I show that these are not prophecies of the person called Jesus Christ, nor have reference to any such person, it will be perfectly needless to combat those which translators, or the Church, have invented, and for which they had no other authority than their own imagination.

I begin with the book called the Gospel according to St. Matthew.

In the first chap. ver. 18, it is said, "*Now the birth of Jesus Christ was in this wise ; when his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together* SHE WAS FOUND WITH CHILD BY THE HOLY GHOST."—This is going a little too fast ; because to make this verse agree with the next it should have said no more than that *she was found with child ;* for the next verse says, "*Then Joseph her husband being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.*" —Consequently Joseph had found out no more than that she was with child, and he knew it was not by himself.

V. 20. "*And while he thought of these things*, (that is whether he should put her away privily, or make a public example of her,) *behold the Angel of the Lord appeared to him* IN A DREAM (that is, Joseph *dreamed* that an angel appeared unto him) *saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son and call his name Jesus ; for he shall save his people from their sins.*"

Now, without entering into any discussion upon the merits or demerits of the account here given, it is proper to observe, that it has no higher authority than that of a dream ; for it is

impossible for a man to behold any thing in a dream, but that which he dreams of. I ask not, therefore, whether Joseph (if there was such a man) had such a dream or not; because admitting he had, it proves nothing. So wonderful and rational is the faculty of the mind in dreams, that it acts the part of all the characters its imagination creates, and what it thinks it hears from any of them, is no other than what the roving rapidity of its own imagination invents. It is, therefore, nothing to me what Joseph dreamed of; whether of the fidelity or infidelity of his wife.—I pay no regard to my own dreams, and I should be weak indeed to put faith in the dreams of another.

The verses that follow those I have quoted, are the words of the writer of the book of Matthew. "*Now*, (says he,) *all this* (that is, all this dreaming and this pregnancy) *was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying*,

"*Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted, is, God with us.*"

This passage is in Isaiah, chap. vii. ver. 14, and the writer of the book of Matthew endeavours to make his readers believe that this passage is a prophecy of the person called Jesus Christ. It is no such thing—and I go to show it is not. But it is first necessary that I explain the occasion of these words being spoken by Isaiah; the reader will then easily perceive, that so far from their being a prophecy of Jesus Christ, they have not the least reference to such a person, or any thing that could happen in the time that Christ is said to have lived which was about seven hundred years after the time of Isaiah. The case is this;

On the death of Solomon the Jewish nation split into two monarchies: one called the kingdom of Judah, the capital of which was Jerusalem: the other the kingdom of Israel, the capital of which was Samaria. The kingdom of Judah followed the line of David, and the kingdom of Israel that of Saul; and these two rival monarchies frequently carried on fierce wars against each other.

At the time Ahaz was king of Judah, which was in the time of Isaiah, Pekah was king of Israel; and Pekah joined himself to Rezin, king of Syria, to make war against Ahaz, king of Judah; and these two kings marched a confederated and powerful army

against Jerusalem. Ahaz and his people became alarmed at the danger, and "*their hearts were moved as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.*" Isaiah, chap. vii. ver. 3.

In this perilous situation of things, Isaiah addressed himself to Ahaz, and assures him, in the name of the Lord, (the cant phrase of all the prophets) that these two kings should not succeed against him; and, to assure him that this should be the case, (the case was however directly contrary*) tells Ahaz to ask a sign of the Lord. This Ahaz declined doing, giving as a reason, that he would not tempt the Lord; upon which Isaiah who pretends to be sent from God, says, ver. 14, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign, *behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son*—Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good—For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land which thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings"—meaning the king of Israel and the king of Syria, who were marching against him.

Here then is the sign, which was to be the birth of a child, and that child a son; and here also is the time limited for the accomplishment of the sign, namely, before the child should know to refuse the evil and choose the good.

The thing, therefore, to be a sign of success to Ahaz, must be something that would take place before the event of the battle then pending between him and the two kings could be known. A thing to be a sign must precede the thing signified. The sign of rain must be before the rain.

It would have been mockery and insulting nonsense for Isaiah to have assured Ahaz as a sign, that these two kings should not prevail against him: that a child should be born seven hundred years after he was dead; and that before the child so born should know to refuse the evil and choose the good, he, Ahaz, should be delivered from the danger he was then immediately threatened with.

* Chron. chap. xxviii. ver. 1st. *Ahas was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, but he did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord.*—ver. 5. *Wherefore the Lord his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria, and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captive and brought them to Damascus; and he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.*

Ver. 6. *And Pekah (king of Israel) slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day.*—ver. 8. *And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand women, sons, and daughters.*

But the case is, that the child of which Isaiah speaks was *his own child*, with which his wife or his mistress was then pregnant; for he says in the next chapter, v. 2, "*And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah; and I went unto the propheteess, and she conceived and bear a son;*" and he says, at ver. 18 of the same chapter, "*Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel.*"

It may not be improper here to observe, that the word translated *a virgin* in Isaiah, does not signify a virgin in Hebrew, but merely a *young woman*. The tense also is falsified in the translation. Levi gives the Hebrew text of the 14th ver. of the 7th chap. of Isaiah, and the translation in English with it—"*Behold a young woman is with child and beareth a son.*" The expression, says he, is in the present tense. This translation agrees with the other circumstances related of the birth of this child, which was to be a sign to Ahaz. But as the true translation could not have been imposed upon the world as a prophecy of a child to be born seven hundred years afterwards, the Christian translators have falsified the original: and instead of making Isaiah to say, behold a *young woman* is with child and *beareth* a son—they make him to say, behold a *virgin shall* conceive and *bear* a son. It is, however, only necessary for a person to read the 7th and 8th chapters of Isaiah, and he will be convinced that the passage in question is no prophecy of the person called Jesus Christ. I pass on to the second passage quoted from the Old Testament by the New, as a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

Matthew, chap. ii. ver. 1. "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judah, in the days of Herod the king, behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem—saying, where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod, the king, heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him—and when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born—and they said unto him in Bethlehem, in the land of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet—*and thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judea, art not the least among the Princes of Judea, for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my people Israel.*" This passage is in Micah, chap. 5. ver. 2.

I pass over the absurdity of seeing and following a star in the day-time, as a man would a *Will with the wisp*, or a candle and lantern at night; and also that of seeing it in the east, when themselves came from the east; for could such a thing be seen at all to serve them for a guide, it must be in the west to them. I confine myself solely to the passage called a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

The book of Micah, in the passage above quoted, chap. v. ver. 2, is speaking of some person without mentioning his name from whom some great achievements were expected; but the description he gives of this person at the 5th verse, proves evidently that it is not Jesus Christ, for he says at the 5th ver. "and *this man* shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise up against him (that is, against the Assyrian) seven shepherds and eight principal men—v. 6. And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod on the entrance thereof; thus shall *He* (the person spoken of at the head of the second verse) deliver us from the Assyrian when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders."

This is so evidently descriptive of a military chief, that it cannot be applied to Christ without outraging the character they pretend to give us of him. Besides which, the circumstances of the times here spoken of, and those of the times in which Christ is said to have lived, are in contradiction to each other. It was the Romans, and not the Assyrians, that had conquered and *were in the land* of Judea, and *trod in their palaces* when Christ was born, and when he died, and so far from his driving them out, it was they who signed the warrant for his execution, and he suffered under it.

Having thus shown that this is no prophecy of Jesus Christ. I pass on to the third passage quoted from the Old Testament by the New, as a prophecy of him.

This, like the first I have spoken of, is introduced by a dream. Joseph dreameth another dream, and dreameth that he seeth another angel. The account begins at the 13th v. of 2d chap. of Matthew.

"The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: For Herod will

seek the life of the young child to destroy him. When he arose he took the young child and his mother by night and departed into Egypt—and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, *Out of Egypt I have called my son.*"

This passage is in the book of Hosea, chap. xi. ver. 1. The words are, "When Israel was a child then I loved him and *called my son out of Egypt*—As they called them, so they went from them, they sacrificed unto Baalam and burnt incense to graven images."

This passage falsely called a prophecy of Christ, refers to the children of Israel coming out of Egypt in the time of Pharoah, and to the idolatory they committed afterwards. To make it apply to Jesus Christ, he must then be the person who *sacrificed unto Baalam and burnt incense to graven images*, for the person called out of Egypt by the collective name, Israel, and the persons committing this idolatory, are the same persons, or the descendants from them. This, then, can be no prophecy of Jesus Christ, unless they are willing to make an idolator of him. I pass on to the fourth passage, called, a prophecy by the writer of the book of Matthew.

This is introduced by a story, told by nobody but himself, and scarcely believed by any body, of the slaughter of all the children under two years old, by the command of Herod. A thing which it is not probable should be done by Herod, as he only held an office under the Roman government, to which appeals could always be had, as we see in the case of Paul.

Matthew, however, having made or told his story, says, chap. ii. v. 17.—"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah, the prophet, saying,—*In Ramah was there a voice heard, lamentation, weeping and great mourning; Rachael weeping for her children, and would not be comforted because they were not.*"

This passage is in Jeremiah, chap. xxxi. ver. 15, and this verse, when separated from the verses before and after it, and which explains its application, might, with equal propriety, be applied to every case of wars, sieges, and other violences, such as the Christians themselves have often done to the Jews, where mothers have lamented the loss of their children. There is nothing in the verse, taken singly, that designates or points out any particular application of it, otherwise than it points to some circumstances which, at the time of writing it, had already happened,

and not to a thing yet to happen, for the verse is in the preter or past tense. I go to explain the case and show the application of the verse.

Jeremiah lived in the time that Nebuchadnezzar besieged, took, plundered, and destroyed Jerusalem, and led the Jews captive to Babylon. He carried his violence against the Jews to every extreme. He slew the sons of king Zedekiah before his face, he then put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and kept him in prison till the day of his death.

It is of this time of sorrow and suffering to the Jews that Jeremiah is speaking. Their temple was destroyed, their land desolated, their nation and government entirely broken up, and themselves, men, women and children, carried into captivity. They had too many sorrows of their own, immediately before their eyes, to permit them, or any of their chiefs, to be employing themselves on things that might, or might not, happen in the world seven hundred years afterwards.

It is, as already observed, of this time of sorrow and suffering to the Jews that Jeremiah is speaking in the verse in question. In the two next verses, the 16th and 17th, he endeavours to console the sufferers by giving them hopes, and, according to the fashion of speaking in those days, assurances from the Lord, that their sufferings should have an end. and that *their children should return again to their own children.* But I leave the verses to speak for themselves, and the Old Testament to testify against the New.

Jeremiah, chap. xxxi. ver. 15.—"Thus saith the Lord, a voice *was* heard in Ramah (it is in the preter tense) lamentation and bitter weeping: Rachael, weeping for her children because they were not."

Verse 16.—"Thus saith the Lord, refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, said the Lord, *and* THEY *shall come again from the land of the enemy.*"

Verse 17.—"And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that *thy children shall come again to their own border.*"

By what strange ignorance or imposition is it, that the children of which Jeremiah speaks, (meaning the people of the Jewish nation, scripturally called *children of Israel*, and not mere infants under two years old,) and who were to return again from the land of the enemy, and come again into their own borders, can mean the

children that Matthew makes Herod to slaughter? Could those return again from the land of the enemy, or how can the land of the enemy be applied to them? Could they come again to their own borders? Good heavens! How has the world been imposed upon by Testament-makers, priestcraft, and pretended prophecies. I pass on to the fifth passage called a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

This, like two of the former, is introduced by dream. Joseph dreamed another dream, and dreameth of another Angel. And Matthew is again the historian of the dream and the dreamer. If it were asked how Matthew could know what Joseph dreamed, neither the Bishop nor all the Church could answer the question. Perhaps it was Matthew that dreamed, and not Joseph; that is, Joseph dreamed by proxy, in Matthew's brain, as they tell us Daniel dreamed for Nebuchadnezzar. But be this as it may, I go on with my subject.

The account of this dream is in Matthew, chap. ii. verse 19.—"But when Herod was dead, behold an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt—Saying, arise, and take the young child and its mother and go into the land of Israel, for they are dead which sought the young child's life—and he arose and took the young child and his mother and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither. Notwithstanding being warned of God in a *dream* (here is another dream) he turned aside into the parts of Galilee; and he came and dwelt in a city called *Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets.—He shall be called a Nazarine.*"

Here is good circumstantial evidence, that Matthew dreamed, for there is no such passage in all the Old Testament; and I invite the bishop and all the priests in Christendom, including those of America, to produce it. I pass on to the sixth passage, called a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

This, as Swift says on another occasion, is *lugged in head and shoulders;* it need only to be seen in order to be hooted as a forced and far-fetched piece of imposition.

Matthew, chap. iv. v. 12. "Now when Jesus heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee—and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zebulon and Nephthalim—That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias (Isaiah) the prophet, say-

ing, *The land of Zebulon and the land of Nepthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the Gentiles—the people which sat in darkness saw great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is springing upon them.*"

I wonder Matthew has not made the cris-cross-row, or the christ-cross-row (I know not how the priests spell it) into a prophecy. He might as well have done this as cut out these unconnected and undescriptive sentences from the place they stand in and dubbed them with that title.

The words, however, are in Isaiah, chap. ix. verse 1, 2, as follows :—

" Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted *the land of Zebulon and the land of Nephthali, and afterwards did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan in Galilee of the nations.*"

All this relates to two circumstances that had already happened, at the time these words in Isaiah were written. The one, where the land of Zebulon and Nephthali had been lightly afflicted, and afterwards more grievously by the way of the sea.

But observe, reader, how Matthew has falsified the text. He begins his quotation at a part of the verse where there is not so much as a comma, and thereby cuts off every thing that relates to the first affliction. He then leaves out all that relates to the second affliction, and by this means leaves out every thing that makes the verse intelligible, and reduces it to a senseless skeleton of names of towns.

To bring this imposition of Matthew clearly and immediately before the eye of the reader, I will repeat the verse, and put between crotchets the words he has left out, and put in Italics those he has preserved.

[Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation when at the first he lightly afflicted] *the land of Zebulon and the land of Nephthali,* [and did afterwards more grievously afflict her] *by the way of the sea beyond Jordan in Galilee of the nations.*

What gross imposition is it to gut, as the phrase is, a verse in this manner, render it perfectly senseless, and then puff it off on a credulous world as a prophecy. I proceed to the next verse.

Ver. 2. " The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light ; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon

them hath the light shined." All this is historical, and not in the least prophetical. The whole is in the preter tense: it speaks of things that *had been accomplished* at the time the words were written, and not of things to be accomplished afterwards.

As then the passage is in no possible sense prophetical, nor intended to be so, and that to attempt to make it so, is not only to falsify the original, but to commit a criminal imposition; it is matter of no concern to us, otherwise than as curiosity, to know who the people were of which the passage speaks, that sat in darkness, and what the light was that shined in upon them.

If we look into the preceding chapter, the 8th, of which the 9th is only a continuation, we shall find the writer speaking, at the 19th verse, of "*witches and wizards who peep about and mutter*," and of people who made application to them; and he preaches and exhorts them against this darksome practice. It is of this people, and of this darksome practice, or *walking in darkness*, that he is speaking at the 2d verse of the 9th chapter; and with respect to *the light that had shined in upon them*, it refers entirely to his own ministry, and to the boldness of it, which opposed itself to that of *the witches and wizards who peeped about and muttered.*

Isaiah is, upon the whole, a wild disorderly writer, preserving in general no clear chain of perception in the arrangement of his ideas, and consequently producing no defined conclusions from them. It is the wildness of his style, the confusion of his ideas, and the ranting metaphors he employs, that have afforded so many opportunities to priestcraft in some cases, and to superstition in others, to impose those defects upon the world as prophecies of Jesus Christ. Finding no direct meaning in them, and not knowing what to make of them, and supposing at the same time they were intended to have a meaning, they supplied the defect by inventing a meaning of their own, and called it his. I have, however, in this place done Isaiah the justice to rescue him from the claws of Matthew, who has torn him unmercifully to pieces; and from the imposition or ignorance of priests and commentators, by letting Isaiah speak for himself.

If the words *walking in darkness*, and *light breaking in*, could in any case be applied prophetically, which they cannot be, they would better apply to the times we now live in than to any other. The world has "*walked in darkness*" for eighteen hundred years, both as to religion and government, and it is only since the Ame-

rican Revolution began that light has broken in. The belief of *one God*, whose attributes are revealed to us in the book or scripture of the creation, which no human hand can counterfeit or falsify, and not in the written or printed book which, as Matthew has shown, can be altered or falsified by ignorance or design, is now making its way among us: and as to government, *the light is already gone forth*, and whilst men ought to be careful not to be blinded by the excess of it, as at a certain time in France, when every thing was Robespierean violence, they ought to reverence, and even to adore it, with all the firmness and perseverance that true wisdom can inspire.

I pass on to the seventh passage, called a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

Matthew, chap. viii. ver. 16. "When the evening was come, they brought unto him (Jesus) many that were possessed with devils, and he cast out the spirit with his word, and healed all that were sick.—That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias (Isaiah) the prophet, saying, *himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.*

This affair of people being possessed by devils, and of casting them out, was the fable of the day when the books of the New Testament were written. It had not existence at any other time. The books of the old Testament mention no such thing; the people of the present day know of no such thing; nor does the history of any people or country speak of such a thing. It starts upon us all at once in the book of Matthew, and is altogether an invention of the New Testament-makers and the Christian church. The book of Matthew is the first book where the word *Devil* is mentioned.* We read in some of the books of the Old Testament of things called familiar spirits, the supposed companions of people called witches and wizards. It was no other than the trick of pretended conjurors to obtain money from credulous and ignorant people, or the fabricated charge of superstitious malignancy against unfortunate and decrepid old age.

But the idea of a familar spirit, if we can affix any idea to the term, is exceedingly different to that of being possessed by a devil. In the one case, the supposed familar spirit is a dexterous agent, that comes and goes and does as he is bidden; in the

* The word *devil* is a personification of the word *evil*.

other, he is a turbulent roaring monster, that tears and tortures the body into convulsions. Reader, whoever thou art, put thy trust in thy Creator, make use of the reason he endowed thee with, and cast from thee all such fables.

The passage alluded to by Matthew, for as a quotation it is false, is in Isaiah, chap. liii. ver. 4, which is as follows :

"Surely *he* (the person of whom Isaiah is speaking of) *hath borne* our griefs and carried our sorrows." It is in the preter tense.

Here is nothing about casting out devils, nor curing of sicknesses. The passage, therefore, so far from being a prophecy of Christ, is not even applicable as a circumstance.

Isaiah, or at least the writer of the book that bears his name, employs the whole of this chapter, the 53d, in lamenting the sufferings of some deceased persons, of whom he speaks very pathetically. It is a monody on the death of a friend; but he mentions not the name of the person, nor gives any circumstance of him by which he can be personally known ; and it is this silence, which is evidence of nothing, that Matthew has laid hold of to put the name of Christ to it ; as if the chiefs of the Jews, whose sorrows were then great, and the times they lived in big with danger, were never thinking about their own affairs, nor the fate of their own friends, but were continually running a wild-goose chase into futurity.

To make a monody into a prophecy is an absurdity. The characters and circumstances of men, even in different ages of the world, are so much alike, that what is said of one may with propriety be said of many; but this fitness does not make the passage into a prophecy ; and none but an impostor or a bigot would call it so.

Isaiah, in deploring the hard fate and loss of his friend, mentions nothing of him but what the human lot of man is subject to. All the cases he states of him, his persecutions, his imprisonment, his patience in suffering, and his perseverance in principle, are all within the line of nature : they belong exclusively to none, and may with justness be said of many. But if Jesus Christ was the person the church represents him to be, that which would exclusively apply to him, must be something that could not apply to any other person ; something beyond the line of nature ; something beyond the lot of mortal man; and there are no such

expressions in this chapter, nor any other chapter in the Old Testament.

It is no exclusive description to say of a person, as is said of the person Isaiah is lamenting in this chapter. *He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a Lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.*" This may be said of thousands of persons, who have suffered oppressions and unjust death with patience, silence, and perfect resignation.

Grotius, whom the bishop esteems a most learned man, and who certainly was so, supposes that the person of whom Isaiah is speaking, is Jeremiah. Grotius is led into this opinion, from the agreement there is between the description given by Isaiah, and the case of Jeremiah, as stated in the book that bears his name. If Jeremiah was an innocent man, and not a traitor in the interest of Nebuchadnezzar, when Jerusalem was besieged his case was hard; he was accused by his countrymen, was persecuted, oppressed, and imprisoned, and he says of himself, (see Jeremiah, chap. ii. ver. 19,) "*But as for me, I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter.*"

I should be inclined to the same opinion with Grotius, had Isaiah lived at the time when Jeremiah underwent the cruelties of which he speaks; but Isaiah died about fifty years before; and it is of a person of his own time, whose case Isaiah is lamenting in the chapter in question, and which imposition and bigotry, more than seven hundred years afterwards, perverted into a prophecy of a person they call Jesus Christ.

I pass on to the eighth passage called a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

Matthew, chap, xii. ver. 14. "Then the Pharisees went out and held a council against him, how they might destroy him—But when Jesus knew it he withdrew himself; and great numbers followed him and he healed them all—and he charged them that they should not make him known; That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias (Isaiah) the prophet, saying,

"Behold my servant whom I have chosen; my beloved in whom my soul is well pleased, I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles—he shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets—a bruised reed shall he not break, and smoaking flax shall he not quench, till

he sends forth judgment unto victory—and in his name shall the Gentiles trust."

In the first place, this passage hath not the least relation to the purpose for which it is quoted.

Matthew says, that the Pharisees held a council against Jesus to destroy him—that Jesus withdrew himself—that great numbers followed him—that he healed them—and that he charged them they should not make him known.

But the passage Matthew has quoted as being fulfilled by these circumstances, does not so much as apply to any one of them. It has nothing to do with the Pharisees holding a council to destroy Jesus—with his withdrawing himself—with great numbers following him—with his healing them—nor with his charging them not to make him known.

The purpose for which the passage is quoted, and the passage itself, are as remote from each other, as nothing from something. But the case is, that people have been so long in the habit of reading the books, called the Bible and Testament, with their eyes shut, and their senses locked up, that the most stupid inconsistencies have passed on them for truth, and imposition for prophecy. The all-wise Creator has been dishonoured by being made the author of fable, and the human mind degraded by believing it.

In this passage as in that last mentioned, the name of the person of whom the passage speaks is not given, and we are left in the dark respecting him. It is this defect in the history, that bigotry and imposition have laid hold of, to call it prophecy.

Had Isaiah lived in the time of Cyrus, the passage would descriptively apply to him. As king of Persia, his authority was great among the Gentiles, and it is of such a character the passage speaks; and his friendship for the Jews whom he liberated from captivity, and who might then be compared to a *bruised reed*, was extensive. But this description does not apply to Jesus Christ, who had no authority among the Gentiles; and as to his own countrymen, figuratively described by the bruised reed, it was they who crucified him. Neither can it be said of him that he did not cry, and that his voice was not heard in the street. As a preacher it was his business to be heard, and we are told that he travelled about the country for that purpose. Matthew has given a long sermon, which (if his authority is good,

but which is much to be doubted since he imposes so much,) Jesus preached to a multitude upon a mountain, and it would be a quibble to say that a mountain is not a street, since it is a place equally as public.

The last verse in the passage (the 4th) as it stands in Isaiah, and which Matthew has not quoted, says, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth and the isles shall wait for his law." This also applies to Cyrus. He was not discouraged, he did not fail, he conquered all Babylon, liberated the Jews, and established laws. But this cannot be said of Jesus Christ, who in the passage before us, according to Matthew, withdrew himself for fear of the Pharisees, and charged the people that followed him not to make it known where he was; and who, according to other parts of the Testament, was continually moving from place to place to avoid being apprehended.*

* In the second part of the *Age of Reason*, I have shown that the book ascribed to Isaiah is not only miscellaneous as to matter, but as to authorship; that there are parts in it which could not be written by Isaiah, because they speak of things one hundred and fifty years after he was dead. The instance I have given of this, in that work, corresponds with the subject I am upon, *at least a little better than Matthew's introduction and his quotation.*

Isaiah lived, the latter part of his life, in the time of Hezekiah, and it was about one hundred and fifty years, from the death of Hezekiah to the first year of the reign of Cyrus, when Cyrus published a proclamation, which is given in the first chapter of the book of Ezra, for the return of the Jews to Jerusalem. It cannot be doubted, at least it ought not to be doubted, that the Jews would feel an affectionate gratitude for this act of benevolent Justice, and it is natural they would express that gratitude in the customary style, bombastical and hyperbolical as it was, which they used on extraordinary occasions, and which was, and still is in practice with all the eastern nations.

The instance to which I refer, and which is given in the second part of the Age of Reason, is the last verse of the 44th chapter, and the beginning of the 45th—in these words: "*That saith of Cyrus, he is my shepherd and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem thou shalt be built, and to the Temple, thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut.*"

This complementary address is in the present tense, which shows that the things of which it speaks were in existence at the time of writing it; and consequently that the author must have been at least one hundred and fifty years later than Isaiah, and that the book which bears his name is a compilation. The Proverbs called Solomon's, and the Psalms called David's, are of the same kind. The two last verses of the second book of Chronicles, and the three first verses of the first chapter of Ezra, are word for word the same; which show that the compilers of the Bible mixed the writings of different authors together, and put them under some common head.

As we have here an instance in the 44th and 45th chapters of the introduction of the name of Cyrus into a book to which it cannot belong, it affords good ground to conclude, that the passage in the 42d chapter, in which the character of Cyrus is given without his name, has been introduced in like manner, and that the person there spoken of is Cyrus.

But it is immaterial to us, at this distance of time, to know who the person was: it is sufficient to the purpose I am upon, that of detecting fraud and falsehood, to know who it was not, and to show it was not the person called Jesus Christ.

I pass on to the ninth passage called a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

Matthew, chap. xxi. v. 1. "And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethpage, unto the mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two of his disciples, saying unto them, go into the village over against you, and traightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her, loose them and bring them unto me—and if any man say ought to you, ye shall say, the Lord hath need of them, and straitway he will send them.

"All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, *Tell ye the daughter of Sion, behold thy king cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.*"

Poor ass! let it be some consolation amidst all thy sufferings, that if the heathen world erected a bear into a constellation, the Christian world has elevated thee into a prophecy.

This passage is in Zechariah, chap. ix. ver 9, and is one of the whims of friend Zechariah to congratulate his countrymen, who were then returning from captivity in Babylon, and himself with them, to Jerusalem. It has no concern with any other subject. It is strange that apostles, priests, and commentators, never permit, or never suppose, the Jews to be speaking of their own affairs. Every thing in the Jewish books is perverted and distorted into meanings never intended by the writers. Even the poor ass must not be a Jew-ass but a Christian-ass. I wonder they did not make an apostle of him. or a bishop, or at least make him speak and prophecy. He could have lifted up his voice as loud as any of them.

Zechariah, in the first chapter of his book, indulges himself in several whims on the joy of getting back to Jerusalem. He says at the 8th verse, "I saw by night (Zechariah was a sharp-sighted seer) and behold a man setting on a *red horse*, (yes, reader, a *red horse*,) and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom, and behind him were *red horses speckled and white.*" He says nothing about green horses, nor blue horses, perhaps because it is difficult to distinguish green from blue by night, but a

Christian can have no doubt they were there, because "*faith is the evidence of things not seen.*"

Zechariah then introduces an angel among his horses, but he does not tell us what colour the angel was of, whether black or white, nor whether he came to buy horses, or only to look at them as curiosities, for certainly they were of that kind. Be this however as it may, he enters into conversation with this angel, on the joyful affair of getting back to Jerusalem, and he saith at the 16th verse, "Therefore, thus saith the Lord, *I am returned* to Jerusalem with mercies; my house shall be built in it saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem." An expression signifying the rebuilding the city.

All this, whimsical and imaginary as it is, sufficiently proves that it was the entry of the Jews into Jerusalem from captivity, and not the entry of Jesus Christ, seven hundred years afterwards, that is the subject upon which Zechariah is always speaking.

As to the expression of riding upon an ass, which commentators represent as a sign of humility in Jesus Christ, the case is, he never was so well mounted before. The asses of those countries are large and well-proportioned, and were anciently the chief of riding animals. Their beasts of burden, and which served also for the conveyance of the poor, were camels and dromedaries. We read in judges, chap. x. ver. 4, that "Jair, (one of the Judges of Israel,) had thirty sons that rode on thirty *ass-colts*, and they had thirty cities." But commentators distort every thing.

There is besides very reasonable grounds to conclude that this story of Jesus riding publicly into Jerusalem, accompanied, as it is said at the 8th and 9th verses, by a great multitude, shouting and rejoicing, and spreading their garments by the way, is altogether a story destitute of truth.

In the last passage called a prophecy that I examined, Jesus is represented as withdrawing, that is, running away, and concealing himself for fear of being apprehended, and charging the people that were with him not to make him known. No new circumstance had arisen in the interim to change his condition for the better; yet here he is represented as making his public entry into the same city from which he had fled for safety. The two cases contradict each other so much, that if both are not false, one of them at least can scarcely be true. For my own part, I do not believe there is one word of historical truth in the whole book.

I look upon it at best to be a romance : the principal personage of which is an imaginary or allegorical character founded upon some tale, and in which the moral is in many parts good, and the narrative part very badly and blunderingly written.

I pass on to the tenth passage, called a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

Matthew, chap. xxvi. ver. 51. "And behold one of them which was with Jesus (meaning Peter) stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him ; Put up again thy sword into its place, for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels. But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be. In that same hour Jesus said to the multitudes, are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and with staves for to take me ? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. But all this was done that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.

This loose and general manner of speaking, admits neither of detection nor of proof. Here is no quotation given, nor the name of any Bible author mentioned, to which reference can be had.

There are, however, some high improbabilities against the truth of the account.

First—It is not probable that the Jews, who were then a conquered people, and under subjection to the Romans, should be permitted to wear swords.

Secondly—If Peter had attacked the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear, he would have been immediately taken up by the guard that took up his master and sent to prison with him.

Thirdly—What sort of disciples and preaching apostles must those of Christ have been that wore swords ?

Fourthly—This scene is represented to have taken place the same evening of what is called the Lord's supper, which makes, according to the ceremony of it, the inconsistency of wearing swords the greater.

I pass on to the eleventh passage called a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

Matthew, chap. xxvii. ver. 3. "Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented him-

self, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, what is that to us, see thou to that. And he cast down the thirty pieces of silver, and departed, and went and hanged himself—And the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, it is not lawful to put them in the treasury, because it is the price of blood—And they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field to bury strangers in—Wherefore that field is called the field of blood unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value, and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me."

This is a most barefaced piece of imposition. The passage in Jeremiah which speaks of the purchase of a field, has no more to do with the case to which Matthew applies it, than it has to do with the purchase of lands in America. I will recite the whole passage:

Jeremiah. chap. xxxii. v. 6. "And Jeremiah said, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying—Behold Hanamiel, the son of Shallum thine uncle, shall come unto thee, saying, buy thee my field that is in Anathoth, for the right of redemption is thine to buy it—So Hanamiel mine uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison, according to the word of the Lord, and said unto me, buy my field I pray thee that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin, for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself. Then I knew this was the word of the Lord—And I bought the field of Hanamiel mine uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver—and I subscribed the evidence and sealed it, and took witnesses and weighed him the money in balances. So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open—and I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch, the son of Neriah, the son of Maasaeiath, in the sight of Hanamiel mine uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison—and I charged Baruch before them, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase both which is sealed, and this evidence which is

open, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days—for thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, houses, and fields, and vineyards, shall be possessed again in this land."

I forbear making any remark on this abominable imposition of Matthew. The thing glaringly speaks for itself. It is priests and commentators that I rather ought to censure, for having preached falsehood so long, and kept people in darkness with respect to those impositions. I am not contending with these men upon points of doctrine, for I know that sophistry has always a city of refuge. I am speaking of facts: for wherever the thing called a fact is a falsehood, the faith founded upon it is delusion, and the doctrine raised upon it not true. Ah, reader, put thy trust in thy Creator, and thou wilt be safe! but if thou trustest to the book called the scriptures, thou trustest to the rotten staff of fable and falsehood. But I return to my subject.

There is among the whims and reveries of Zechariah, mention made of thirty pieces of silver given to a potter. They can hardly have been so stupid as to mistake a potter for a field: and if they had, the passage in Zechariah has no more to do with Jesus, Judas, and the field to bury strangers in, than that already quoted. I will recite the passage.

Zechariah, chap. xi. ver. 7. "And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock; and I took unto me two staves; the one I called *Beauty*, and the other I called *Bands*, and I fed the flock—Three shepherds also, I cut off in one month; and my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me.—Then said I, I will not feed you; that which dieth, let it die; and that which is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another.—And I took my staff, even *Beauty*, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people.—And it was broken in that day; and so the poor of the flock who waited upon me, knew that it was the word of the Lord.

"And I said unto them, if ye think good give me my price, and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price *thirty pieces of silver*. And the Lord said unto me, cast it unto the *potter*, a goodly price that I was prized at of them; and I took the thirty pieces of silver and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord.

"When I cut asunder mine other staff, even *Bands*, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel."*

There is no making either head or tail of this incoherent gibberish. His two staves, one called *Beauty* and the other *Bands*, is so much like a fairy tale, that I doubt if it had any other origin. —There is, however, no part that has the least relation to the case stated in Matthew; on the contrary, it is the reverse of it. Here the *thirty pieces* of silver, whatever it was for, is called a *goodly price*, it was as much as the thing was worth, and according to the language of the day, was approved of by the Lord, and the money given to the potter in the house of the Lord. In the case of Jesus and Judas, as stated in Matthew, the thirty pieces of silver were the price of blood; the transaction was condemned by the Lord, and the money when refunded, was refused admittance into the Treasury. Every thing in the two cases is the reverse of each other.

Besides this, a very different and direct contrary account to that of Matthew, is given of the affair of Judas, in the book called the *Acts of the Apostles*; according to that book, the case is, that so far from Judas repenting and returning the money, and the high priest buying a field with it to bury strangers in, Judas kept the

* Whiston, in his Essay on the Old Testament, says, that the passage of Zechariah of which I have spoken, was in the copies of the Bible of the first century, in the book of Jeremiah, from whence, says he, it was taken and inserted without coherence, in that of Zechariah—well, let it be so, it does not make the case a whit the better for the New Testament; but it makes the case a great deal the worse for the Old. Because it shows, as I have mentioned respecting some passages in a book ascribed to Isaiah, that the works of different authors have been so mixed and confounded together, they cannot now be discriminated, except where they are historical, chronological, or biographical, as in the interpolation in Isaiah. It is the name of Cyrus inserted where it could not be inserted, as he was not in existence till one hundred and fifty years after the time of Isaiah, that detects the interpolation and the blunder with it.

Whiston was a man of great literary learning, and what is of much higher degree, of deep scientific learning. He was one of the best and most celebrated mathematicians of his time, for which he was made professor of mathematics of the University of Cambridge. He wrote so much in defence of the Old Testament, and of what he calls prophecies of Jesus Christ, that at last he began to suspect the truth of the Scriptures, and wrote against them; for it is only those who examine them, that see the imposition. Those who believe them most, are those who know least about them.

Whiston, after writing so much in defence of the Scriptures, was at last prosecuted for writing against them. It was this that gave occasion to Swift, in his ludicrous epigram on Ditton and Whiston, each of which set up to find out the longitude, to call the one *good master Ditton* and the other, *wicked Will Whiston*. But as Swift was a great associate with the Freethinkers of those days, such as Bolingbroke, Pope, and others, who did not believe the book called the scriptures, there is no certainty whether he wittily called him *wicked* for defending the scriptures, or for writing against them. The known character of Swift decides for the former.

money and bought a field with it for himself; and instead of hanging himself, as Matthews says, he fell headlong and burst asunder —some commentators endeavour to get over one part of the contradiction by ridiculously supposing that Judas hanged himself first and the rope broke.

Acts, chap. i. ver. 16. "Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was a guide to them that took Jesus. (David says not a word about Judas,) ver. 17, for he (Judas) was numbered among us and obtained part of our ministry."

Ver. 18. "*Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity, and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and his bowels gushed out.*" Is it not a species of blasphemy to call the New Testament *revealed religion*, when we see in it such contradictions and absurdities.

I pass on to the twelfth passage called a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

Matthew, chap. xxvii. ver. 35. "And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, *They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.*" This expression is in the 22d Psalm, ver. 18. The writer of that Psalm (whoever he was, for the Psalms are a collection and not the work of one man) is speaking of himself and his own case, and not that of another. He begins this Psalm with the words which the New Testament writers ascribed to Jesus Christ. "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me*"—words which might be uttered by a complaining man without any great impropriety, but very improperly from the mouth of a reputed God.

The picture which the writer draws of his own situation in this Psalm, is gloomy enough. He is not prophecying, but complaining of his own hard case. He represents himself as surrounded by enemies, and beset by persecutions of every kind; and by way of showing the inveteracy of his persecutors, he says, at the 18th verse, "*They parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.*" The expression is in the present tense; and is the same as to say, they pursue me even to the clothes upon my back, and dispute how they shall divide them; besides, the word *vesture* does not always mean clothing of any kind, but *property*, or rather

the admitting a man to, or *investing* him with property; and as it is used in this Psalm distinct from the word garment, it appears to be used in this sense. But Jesus had no property; for they make him say of himself, "*The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.*"

But be this as it may, if we permit ourselves to suppose the Almighty would condescend to tell, by what is called the spirit of prophecy, what could come to pass in some future age of the world, it is an injury to our own faculties, and to our ideas of his greatness, to imagine that it would be about an old coat, or an old pair of breeches, or about any thing which the common accidents of life, or the quarrels that attend it, exhibit every day.

That which is in the power of man to do, or in his will not to do, is not a subject for prophecy, even if there were such a thing, because it cannot carry with it any evidence of divine power, or divine interposition: The ways of God are not the ways of men. That which an almighty power performs, or wills, is not within the circle of human power to do, or to controul. But any executioner and his assistants might quarrel about dividing the garments of a sufferer, or divide them without quarelling, and by that means fulfil the thing called a prophecy or set it aside.

In the passage before examined, I have exposed the falsehood of them. In this I exhibit its degrading meanness, as an insult to the Creator and an injury to human reason.

Here end the passages called prophecies by Matthew.

Matthew concludes his book by saying, that when Christ expired on the cross, the rocks rent, the graves opened, and the bodies of many of the saints arose; and Mark says, there was darkness over the land from the sixth hour until the ninth. They produce no prophecy for this; but had these things been facts, they would have been a proper subject for prophecy, because none but an almighty power could have inspired a fore-knowledge of them, and afterwards fulfilled them. Since then there is no such prophecy, but a pretended prophecy of an old coat, the proper deduction is, there were no such things, and that the book of Matthew is fable and falsehood.

I pass on to the book called the Gospel according to St. Mark.

THE BOOK OF MARK.

THERE are but few passages in Mark called prophecies; and but few in Luke and John. Such as there are I shall examine, and also such other passages as interfere with those cited by Matthew.

Mark begins his book by a passage which he puts in the shape of a prophecy. Mark, chap. 1, verse 1.—"The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God—As it is written in the prophets, *Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare the way before thee.*" Malachi, chap. iii, verse 1. The passage in the original is in the first person. Mark makes this passage to be a prophecy of John the Baptist, said by the Church to be a forerunner of Jesus Christ. But if we attend to the verses that follow this expression, as it stands in Malachi, and to the first and fifth verses of the next chapter, we shall see that this application of it is erroneous and false.

Malachi having said, at the first verse, "Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me," says, at the second verse, "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap."

This description can have no reference to the birth of Jesus Christ, and consequently none to John the Baptist. It is a scene of fear and terror that is here described, and the birth of Christ is always spoken of as a time of joy and glad tidings.

Malachi, continuing to speak on the same subject, explains in the next chapter what the scene is of which he speaks in the verses above quoted, and whom the person is whom he calls the messenger.

"Behold," says he, chap. iv. verse 1, "the day cometh that shall burn like an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day cometh that shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

Verse 5. "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

By what right, or by what imposition or ignorance Mark has made Elijah into John the Baptist, and Malachi's description of

the day of judgment into the birth day of Christ, I leave to the Bishop to settle.

Mark, in the second and third verses of his first chapter, confounds two passages together, taken from different books of the Old Testament. The second verse, "Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare the way before me," is taken, as I have said before, from Malachi. The third verse, which says, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his path straight," is not in Malachi, but in Isaiah, chap. xl, verse 3. Whiston says, that both these verses were originally in Isaiah. If so, it is another instance of the disordered state of the Bible, and corroborates what I have said with respect to the name and description of Cyrus being in the book of Isaiah, to which it cannot chronologically belong.

The words in Isaiah, chap. xl. verse 3. "*The voice of him that cryeth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his path straight,*" are in the present tense, and consequently not predictive. It is one of those rhetorical figures which the Old Testament authors frequently used. That it is merely rhetorical and metaphorical, may be seen at the 6th verse. "And the voice said, cry; and he said what shall I cry? *All flesh is grass.*" This is evidently nothing but a figure; for flesh is not grass otherwise than as a figure or metaphor, where one thing is put for another. Besides which, the whole passage is too general and declamatory to be applied exclusively to any particular person or purpose.

I pass on to the eleventh chapter.

In this chapter, Mark speaks of Christ riding into Jerusalem upon a colt, but he does not make it the accomplishment of a prophecy, as Matthew has done; for he says nothing about a prophecy. Instead of which, he goes on the other tack, and in order to add new honors to the ass, he makes it to be a miracle; for he says, ver. 2, it was "*a colt whereon never man sat;*" signifying thereby, that as the ass had not been broken, he consequently was inspired *into good manners*, for we do not hear that he kicked Jesus Christ off. There is not a word about his kicking in all the four Evangelists.

I pass on from these feats of *horsemanship*, performed upon a jack-ass, to the 15th chapter.

At the 24th verse of this chapter, Mark speaks of *parting Christ's garments and casting lots upon them*, but he applies no

prophecy to it as Matthew does. He rather speaks of it as a thing then in practice with executioners, as it is at this day.

At the 28th verse of the same chapter, Mark speaks of Christ being crucified between two thieves; that, says he, "*the scriptures might be fulfilled which sa th, and he was numbered with the transgressors.*" The same thing might be said of the thieves.

This expression is in Isaiah, chap. liii. ver. 12—Grotius applies it to Jeremiah. But the case has happened so often in the world, where innocent men have been numbered with transgressors, and is still continually happening, that it is absurdity to call it a prophecy of any particular person. All those whom the church call martyrs were numbered with transgressors. All the honest patriots who fell upon the scaffold in France, in the time of Robespierre, were numbered with transgressors; and if himself had not fallen, the same case, according to a note in his own handwriting, had befallen me; yet I suppose the bishop will not allow that Isaiah was prophesying of Thomas Paine.

These are all the passages in Mark which have any reference to prophecies.

Mark concludes his book by making Jesus say to his disciples, chap. xvi. ver. 15, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned, (fine Popish stuff this,) and these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

Now, the bishop, in order to know if he has all this saving and wonder-working faith, should try those things upon himself. He should take a good dose of arsenic, and if he please, I will send him a rattle-snake from America!. As for myself, as I believe in God and not at all in Jesus Christ, nor in the books called the scriptures, the experiment does not concern me.

I pass on to the book of Luke.

There are no passages in Luke called prophecies, excepting those which relate to the passages I have already examined.

Luke speaks of Mary being espoused to Joseph, but he makes no references to the passage in Isaiah, as Matthew does. He speaks also of Jesus riding into Jerusalem upon a colt, but he

says nothing about a prophecy. He speaks of John the Baptist and refers to the passage in Isaiah of which I have already spoken.

At the 13th chapter, verse 31, he says, "The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him (Jesus) get thee out and depart hence, for Herod will kill thee—and he said unto them, go ye and tell that fox, behold I cast out devils and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected."

Matthew makes Herod to die whilst Christ was a child in Egypt, and makes Joseph to return with the child on the news of Herod's death, who had sought to kill him. Luke makes Herod to be living, and to seek the life of Jesus after Jesus was thirty years of age: for he says, chap. iii. v. 23, "And Jesus began to be about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph."

The obscurity in which the historical part of the New Testament is involved with respect to Herod, may afford to priests and commentators a plea, which to some may appear plausible, but to none satisfactory, that the Herod of which Matthew speaks, and the Herod of which Luke speaks, were different persons. Matthew calls Herod a king; and Luke, chap. iii. v. 1, calls Herod Tetrarch (that is, Governor) of Galilee. But there could be no such person as *a king Herod*, because the Jews and their country were then under the dominion of the Roman Emperors who governed then by Tetrarchs or Governors.

Luke, chap. ii. makes Jesus to be born when Cyrenius was Governor of Syria, to which government Judea was annexed; and according to this, Jesus was not born in the time of Herod. Luke says nothing about Herod seeking the life of Jesus when he was born; nor of his destroying the children under two years old; nor of Joseph fleeing with Jesus into Egypt: nor of his returning from thence. On the contrary, the book of Luke speaks as if the person it calls Christ had never been out of Judea, and that Herod sought his life after he commenced preaching, as is before stated. I have already shown that Luke, in the book called the Acts of the Apostles, (which commentators ascribe to Luke,) contradicts the account in Matthew, with respect to Judas and the thirty pieces of silver. Matthew says, that Judas returned the money, and that the high priests bought with it a field to bury

strangers in. Luke says, that Judas kept the money, and bought a field with it for himself.

As it is impossible the wisdom of God should err, so it is impossible those books should have been written by divine inspiration. Our belief in God, and his unerring wisdom, forbids us to believe it. As for myself, I feel religiously happy in the total disbelief of it.

There are no other passages called prophecies in Luke than those I have spoken of. I pass on to the book of John.

THE BOOK OF JOHN.

John, like Mark and Luke, is not much of a prophecy-monger. He speaks of the ass, and the casting lots for Jesus' clothes, and some other trifles, of which I have already spoken.

John makes Jesus to say, chap. v. ver. 46, "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me." The book of the Acts, in speaking of Jesus, says, chap. iii. ver. 22, "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me, him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you."

This passage is in Deuteronomy, chap. xviii. ver. 15. They apply it as a prophecy of Jesus. What impositions! The person spoken of in Deuteronomy, and also in Numbers, where the same person is spoken of, is *Joshua*, the minister of Moses, and his immediate successor, and just such another Robespierrean character as Moses is represented to have been. The case, as related in those books, is as follows :—

Moses was grown old and near to his end, and in order to prevent confusion after his death, for the Israelites had no settled system of government; it was thought best to nominate a successor to Moses while he was yet living. This was done, as we are told, in the following manner :

Numbers, chap. xxvii. ver. 12. "And the Lord said unto Moses, get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel—and when thou hast seen it, thou also shall be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother is gathered, ver. 15. And Moses spake unto the Lord, say-

ing, Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation—Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep that have no shepherd—And the Lord said unto Moses, take thee *Joshua*, the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him—and set him before Eleazar, the priest, and before all the congregation, and give him a charge in their sight—and thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient—ver. 22, and Moses did as the Lord commanded, and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and he laid hands upon him, and gave him charge as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses."

I have nothing to do, in this place, with the truth, or the conjuration here practised, of raising up a successor to Moses like unto himself. The passage sufficiently proves it is Joshua, and that it is an imposition in John to make the case into a prophecy of Jesus, But the prophecy-mongers were so inspired with falsehood, that they never speak truth.*

* Newton, Bishop of Bristol in England, published a work in three volumes, entitled, "*Dissertations on the Prophecies.*" The work is tediously written and tiresome to read. He strains hard to make every passage into a prophecy that suits his purpose.—Among others, he makes this expression of Moses, "the Lord shall raise thee up a prophet like unto me," into a prophecy of Christ, who was not born, according to the Bible chronologies, till fifteen hundred and fifty-two years after the time of Moses, whereas it was an immediate successor to Moses, who was then near his end, that is spoken of in the passage above quoted.

This Bishop, the better to impose this passage on the world as a prophecy of Christ, has entirely omitted the account in the book of Numbers which I have given at length, word for word, and which shows, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that the person spoken of by Moses, is Joshua, and no other person.

Newton is but a superficial writer. He takes up things upon *hear-say*, and inserts them without either examination or reflection, and the more extraordinary and incredible they are, the better he likes them.

In speaking of the walls of Babylon, (volume the first, page 263,) he makes a quotation from a traveller of the name of *Tavernur*, whom he calls, (by way of giving credit to what he says,) *a celebrated traveller*, that those walls *were made of burnt brick, ten feet square and three feet thick.*—If Newton had only thought of calculating the weight of such a brick, he would have seen the impossibility of their being used or even made. A brick ten feet square, and three feet thick, contains three hundred cubic feet, and allowing a cubic foot of brick to be only one hundred pounds, each of the Bishop's bricks would weigh thirty thousand pounds; and it would take about thirty cart loads of clay (one horse carts) to make one brick.

But his account of the stones used in the building of Solomon's temple, (volume 2d, page 211,) far exeeeds his bricks of ten feet square in the walls of Babylon; these are but brick-bats compared to them.

I pass to the last passage in these fables of the Evangelists called a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

John, having spoken of Jesus expiring on the cross between two thieves, says, chap. xix. verse 32. "Then came the soldiers and brake the legs of the first (meaning one of the thieves) and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs—verse 36, for these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, *A bone of him shall not be broken.*"

The passage here referred to is in Exodus, and has no more to do with Jesus than with the ass he rode upon to Jerusalem;—nor yet so much, if a roasted jack-ass, like a roasted he-goat, might be eaten at a Jewish passover. It might be some consolation to an ass to know that though his bones might be picked, they would not be broken. I go to state the case.

The book of Exodus, in instituting the Jewish passover, in which they were to eat a he-lamb or a he-goat, says, chap. xii,

The stones (says he) employed in the foundation, were in magnitude forty cubits, that is, above sixty feet, a cubit, says he, being somewhat more than one foot and a half, (a cubit is one foot nine inches,) and the superstructure (says this Bishop) was worthy of such foundations. There were some stones, says he, of the whitest marble forty-five cubits long, five cubits high, and six cubits broad. These are the dimensions this Bishop has given, which in measure of twelve inches to a foot, is 78 feet nine inches long, 10 feet 6 inches broad, and 8 feet three inches thick, and contains 7,234 cubic feet. I now go to demonstrate the imposition of this Bishop.

A cubic foot of water weighs sixty-two pounds and a half—The specific gravity of marble to water is as 2 1-2 is to one. The weight, therefore, of a cubic foot of marble is 556 pounds, which, multiplied by 7,234, the number of cubic feet in one of those stones, makes the weight of it to be 1,128,504 pounds, which is 503 tons. Allowing then a horse to draw about half a ton, it will require a thousand horses to draw one such stone on the ground; how then were they to be lifted into the building by human hands?

The bishop may talk of faith removing mountains, but all the faith of all the Bishops that ever lived could not remove one of those stones and their bodily strength given in.

This Bishop also tells of *great guns* used by the Turks at the taking of Constantinople, one of which, he says, was drawn by seventy yoke of oxen, and by two thousand men. Vol. 3d, page 117.

The weight of a cannon that carries a ball of 43 pounds, which is the largest cannon that are cast, weighs 8000 pounds, about three tons and a half, and may be drawn by three yoke of oxen. Any body may now calculate what the weight of the Bishop's great gun must be, that required seventy yoke of oxen to draw it. This Bishop beats Gulliver.

When men give up the use of the divine gift of reason in writing on any subject, be it religious or any thing else, there are no bounds to their extravagance, no limit to their absurdities.

The three volumes which this Bishop has written on what he calls the prophecies, contain above 1290 pages, and he says in vol. 3, page 117, "*I have studied brevity.*" This is as marvellous as the Bishop's great gun.

verse 5. "Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it from the *sheep* or from the *goats*."

The book, after stating some ceremonies to be used in killing and dressing it, (for it was to be roasted, not boiled,) says, ver. 43, "And the Lord said unto Moses and Aaron, this is the ordinance of the passover: there shall no stranger eat thereof; but every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof. A foreigner shall not eat thereof. In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh thereof abroad out of the house; *neither shalt thou break a bone thereof.*"

We here see that the case as it stands in Exodus is a ceremony and not a prophecy, and totally unconnected with Jesus's bones, or any part of him.

John, having thus filled up the measure of apostolic fable, concludes his book with something that beats all fable; for he says at the last verse, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they could be written every one, *I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.*"

This is what in vulgar life is called a *thumper;* that is, not only a lie, but a lie beyond the line of possibility; besides which it is an absurdity, for if they should be written in the world, the world would contain them.—Here ends the examination of the passages called prophecies.

I HAVE now, reader, gone through and examined all the passages which the four books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, quote from the Old Testament and call them prophecies of Jesus Christ. When I first sat down to this examination, I expected to find cause for some censure, but little did I expect to find them so utterly destitute of truth, and of all pretensions to it, as I have shown them to be.

The practice which the writers of those books employ is not more false than it is absurd. They state some trifling case of the person they call Jesus Christ, and then cut out a sentence from some passage of the Old Testament and call it a prophecy of that case. But when the words thus cut out are restored to the place they are taken from, and read with the words before and after

them, they give the lie to the New Testament. A short instance or two of this will suffice for the whole.

They make Joseph to dream of an angel, who informs him that Herod is dead, and tells him to come with the child out of Egypt. They then cut out a sentence from the book of Hosea, "*Out of Egypt have I called my Son*," and apply it as a prophecy in that case.

The words "*And called my Son out of Egypt*," are in the Bible;—but what of that? They are only part of a passage, and not a whole passage, and stand immediately connected with other words, which show they refer to the children of Israel coming out of Egypt in the time of Pharoah, and to the idolatry they committed afterwards.

Again, they tell us that when the soldiers came to break the legs of the crucified persons, they found Jesus was already dead, and, therefore, did not break his. They then, with some alteration of the original, cut out a sentence from Exodus, "*a bone of him shall not be broken*," and apply it as a prophecy of that case.

The words "*Neither shall ye break a bone thereof*," (for they have altered the text,) are in the Bible—but what of that? They are, as in the former case, only part of a passage, and not a whole passage, and when read with the words they are immediately joined to, show it is the bones of a he-lamb or a he-goat of which the passage speaks.

These repeated forgeries and falsifications create a well-founded suspicion, that all the cases spoken of concerning the person called Jesus Christ are *made cases*, on purpose to lug in, and that very clumsily, some broken sentences from the Old Testament, and apply them as prophecies of those cases; and that so far from his being the Son of God, he did not exist even as a man—that he is merely an imaginary or allegorical character, as Apollo, Hercules, Jupiter, and all the deities of antiquity were. There is no history written at the time Jesus Christ is said to have lived that speaks of the existence of such a person, even as a man.

Did we find in any other book pretending to give a system of religion, the falsehoods, falsifications, contradictions, and absurdities, which are to be met with in almost every page of the Old and New Testament, all the priests of the present day, who supposed themselves capable, would triumphantly show their skill in criticism, and cry it down as a most glaring imposition. But since the

books in question belong to their own trade and profession, they or at least many of them, seek to stifle every inquiry into them, and abuse those who have the honesty and the courage to do it.

When a book, as is the case with the Old and New Testament, is ushered into the world under the title of being the WORD OF GOD, it ought to be examined with the utmost strictness, in order to know if it has a well founded claim to that title or not, and whether we are or are not imposed upon: for as no poison is so dangerous as that which poisons the physic, so no falsehood is so fatal as that which is made an article of faith.

This examination becomes more necessary, because when the New Testament was written, I might say invented, the art of printing was not known, and there were no other copies of the Old Testament than written copies. A written copy of that book would cost about as much as six hundred common printed bibles now cost. Consequently was in the hands of very few persons, and these chiefly of the church. This gave an opportunity to the writers of the New Testament to make quotations from the Old Testament as they pleased, and call them prophecies, with very little danger of being detected. Besides which, the terrors and inquisitorial fury of the church, like what they tell us of the flaming sword that turned every way, stood sentry over the New Testament; and time, which brings every thing else to light, has served to thicken the darkness that guards it from detection.

Were the New Testament now to appear for the first time, every priest of the present day would examine it line by line, and compare the detached sentences it calls prophecies with the whole passages in the Old Testament from whence they are taken. Why then do they not make the same examination at this time, as they would make had the New Testament never appeared before? If it be proper and right to make it in one case, it is equally proper and right to do it in the other case. Length of time can make no difference in the right to do it at any time. But, instead of doing this, they go on as their predecessors went on before them, to tell the people there are prophecies of Jesus Christ, when the truth is there are none.

They tell us that Jesus rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. It is very easy to say so; a great lie is as easily told as a little one. But if he had done so, those would have been the only circumstances respecting him that would have differed from

the common lot of man; and, consequently, the only case that would apply exclusively to him, as prophecy, would be some passage in the Old Testament that foretold such things of him. But there is not a passage in the Old Testament that speaks of a person, who, after being crucified, dead, and buried, should rise from the dead, and ascend into heaven. Our prophecy-mongers supply the silence the Old Testament guards upon such things, by telling us of passages they call prophecies, and that falsely so, about Joseph's dream, old clothes, broken bones, and such like trifling stuff.

In writing upon this, as upon every other subject, I speak a language full and intelligible. I deal not in hints and intimations. I have several reasons for this: First, that I may be clearly understood. Secondly, that it may be seen I am in earnest. And thirdly, because it is an affront to truth to treat falsehood with complaisance.

I will close this treatise with a subject I have already touched upon in the First Part of the *Age of Reason*.

The world has been amused with the term *revealed religion*, and the generality of priests apply this term to the books called the Old and New Testament. The Mahometans apply the same term to the Koran. There is no man that believes in revealed religion stronger than I do; but it is not the reveries of the Old and New Testament, nor of the Koran, that I dignify with that sacred title. That which is revelation to me, exists in something which no human mind can invent, no human hand can counterfeit or alter.

The *Word of God* is the *Creation* we behold; and this word of God revealeth to man all that is necessary for man to know of his Creator.

Do we want to contemplate his power? We see it in the immensity of his creation.

Do we want to contemplate his wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible whole is governed.

Do we want to contemplate his munificence? We see it in the abundance with which he fills the earth.

Do we want to contemplate his mercy? We see it in his not withholding that abundance, even from the unthankful.

Do we want to contemplate his will, so far as it respects man?

The goodness he shows to all, is a lesson for our conduct to each other.

In fine—Do we want to know what God is? Search not the book called the Scripture, which any human hand might make, or any impostor invent; but the scripture called the Creation.

When, in the first part of the Age of Reason, I called the Creation the true revelation of God to man, I did not know that any other person had expressed the same idea. But I lately met with the writings of Doctor Conyers Middleton, published the beginning of last century, in which he expresses himself in the same manner with respect to the Creation, as I have done in the Age of Reason.

He was principal librarian of the University of Cambridge, in England, which furnished him with extensive opportunities of reading, and necessarily required he should be well acquainted with the dead as well as the living languages. He was a man of a strong original mind; had the courage to think for himself, and the honesty to speak his thoughts.

He made a journey to Rome, from whence he wrote letters to show that the forms and ceremonies of the Romish Christian Church were taken fro n the degenerate state of the heathen mythology, as it stood in the latter times of the Greeks and Romans. He attacked without ceremony the miracles which the church pretend to perform: and in one of his treatises, he calls the creation a *revelation*. The priests of England of that day, in order to defend their citadel by first defending its out-works, attacked him for attacking the Roman ceremonies; and one of them censures him for calling the *creation* a *revelation*—he thus replies to him:

"One of them," says he, "appears to be scandalized by the title of *revelation* which I have given to that discovery which God made of himself in the visible works of his creation. Yet it is no other than what the wise in all ages have given to it, who consider it as the most authentic and indisputable revelation which God has ever given of himself, from the beginning of the world to this day. It was this by which the first notice of him was revealed to the inhabitants of the earth, and by which alone it has been kept up ever since among the several nations of it. From this the reason of man was enabled to trace out his nature and attributes, and, by a gradual deduction of consequences, to learn his own nature also, with all the duties belonging to it, which relate either

to God or to his fellow-creatures. This constitution of things was ordained by God, as an universal law, or rule of conduct to man—the source of all his knowledge—the test of all truth, by which all subsequent revelations which are supposed to have been given by God in any other manner, must be tried, and cannot be received as divine any further than as they are found to tally and coincide with this original standard.

"It was this divine law which I referred to in the passage above recited, (meaning the passage on which they had attacked him,) being desirous to excite the readers attention to it, as it would enable him to judge more freely of the argument I was handling. For, by contemplating this law, he would discover the genuine way which God himself has marked out to us for the acquisition of true knowledge; not from the authority or reports of our fellow-creatures, but from the information of the facts and material objects which in his providential distribution of worldly things, he hath presented to the perpetual observation of our senses. For as it was from these that his existence and nature, the most important articles of all knowledge, were first discovered to man, so that grand discovery furnished new light towards tracing out the rest, and made all the inferior subjects of human knowledge more easily discoverable to us by the same method.

"I had another view likewise in the same passage, and applicable to the same end, of giving the reader a more enlarged notion of the question in dispute, who, by turning his thoughts to reflect on the works of the Creator, as they are manifested to us in this fabric of the world, could not fail to observe, that they are all of them great, noble, and suitable to the majesty of his nature, carrying with them the proofs of their origin, and showing themselves to be the production of an all-wise and Almighty being; and by accustoming his mind to these sublime reflections, he will be prepared to determine, whether those miraculous interpositions so confidently affirmed to us by the primitive fathers, can reasonably be thought to make part in the grand scheme of the divine administration, or whether it be agreeable that God, who created all things by his will, and can give what turn to them he pleases by the same will, should, for the particular purposes of his government and the services of the church, *descend to the expedient of visions and revelations*, granted sometimes to boys for the instruction of the elders, and sometimes to women to settle the fashion

and length of their veils, and sometimes to pastors of the Church, to enjoin them to ordain one man a lecturer, another a priest;—or that he should scatter a profusion of miracles around the stake of a martyr, yet all of them vain and insignificant, and without any sensible effect, either of preserving the life, or easing the sufferings of the saint; or even of mortifying his persecutors, who were always left to enjoy the full triumph of their cruelty, and the poor martyr to expire in a miserable death. When these things, I say, are brought to the original test, and compared with the genuine and indisputable works of the Creator, how minute, how trifling, how contemptible must they be?—and how incredible must it be thought, that for the instruction of his church, God should employ ministers so precarious, unsatisfactory, and inadequate, as the ecstacies of women and boys, and the visions of interested priests, which were derided at the very time by men of sense to whom they were proposed.

"That this universal law (continues Middleton, meaning the law revealed in the works of the creation) was actually revealed to the heathen world long before the gospel was known, we learn from all the principal sages of antiquity, who made it the capital subject of their studies and writings.

"Cicero has given us a short abstract of it in a fragment still remaining from one of his books on government, which I shall here transcribe in his own words, as they will illustrate my sense also, in the passages that appear so dark and dangerous to my antagonists."

"The true law, (says Cicero,) is right reason conformable to the nature of things, constant, eternal, diffused through all, which calls us to duty by commanding—deters us from sin by forbidding; which never loses its influence with the good, nor ever preserves it with the wicked. This law cannot be over-ruled by any other, nor abrogated in whole or in part; nor can we be absolved from it either by the senate or by the people; nor are we to seek any other comment or interpreter of it but himself; nor can there be one law at Rome and another at Athens—one now and another hereafter: but the same eternal immutable law comprehends all nations at all times, under one common master and governor of all—God. He is the inventor, propounder, enacter of this law; and whoever will not obey it must first renounce himself and throw off the nature of man; by doing which, he will suffer

the greatest punishments, though he should escape all the other torments which are commonly believed to be prepared for the wicked." Here ends the quotation from Cicero.

"Our Doctors (continues Middleton) perhaps will look on this as RANK DEISM; but let them call it what they will, I shall ever avow and defend it as the fundamental, essential, and vital part of all true religion." Here ends the quotation from Middleton.

I have here given the reader two sublime extracts from men who lived in ages of time far remote from each other, but who thought alike. Cicero lived before the time in which they tell us Christ was born. Middleton may be called a man of our own time, as he lived within the same century with ourselves.

In Cicero we see that vast superiority of mind, that sublimity of right reasoning and justness of ideas which man acquires, not by studying Bibles and Testaments, and the theology of schools built thereon, but by studying the Creator in the immensity and unchangeable order of his creation, and the immutability of his law. "*There cannot,*" says Cicero, "*be one law now, and another hereafter; but the same eternal immutable law comprehends all nations, at all times, under one common master and governor of all*—GOD." But according to the doctrine of schools which priests have set up, we see one law, called the Old Testament, given in one age of the world, and another law, called the New Testament, given in another age of the world. As all this is contradictory to the eternal immutable nature, and the unerring and unchangeable wisdom of God, we must be compelled to hold this doctrine to be false, and the old and the new law, called the Old and the New Testament, to be impositions, fables, and forgeries.

In Middleton, we see the manly eloquence of an enlarged mind and the genuine sentiments of a true believer in his Creator. Instead of reposing his faith on books, by whatever name they may be called, whether Old Testament or New, he fixes the creation as the great original standard by which every other thing called the the word, or work of God, to be tried. In this we have an indisputable scale, whereby to measure every word or work imputed to him. If the thing so imputed carries not in itself the evidence of the same Almightiness of power, of the same unerring truth and wisdom, and the same unchangeable order in all its parts, as are visibly demonstrated to our senses, and incompre-

hensible by our reason, in the magnificent fabric of the universe, that word or that work is not of God. Let then the two books called the Old and New Testament be tried by this rule, and the result will be, that the authors of them, whoever they were, will be convicted of forgery.

The invariable principles, and unchangeable order, which regulate the movements of all the parts that compose the universe, demonstrate both to our senses and our reason that its Creator is a God of unerring truth. But the Old Testament, besides the numberless, absurd, and bagatelle stories it tells of God, represents him as a God of deceit, a God not to be confided in. Ezekiel makes God to say, chap. 14, ver. 9, "And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I, *the Lord have deceived that prophet.*" And at the 20th chap. ver. 25, he makes God in speaking of the children of Israel to say "*Wherefore I gave them statutes that were not good, and judgments by which they could not live.*"

This, so far from being the word of God, is horrid blasphemy against him. Reader put thy confidence in thy God, and put no trust in the Bible.

The same Old Testament, after telling us that God created the heavens and the earth in six days, makes the same almighty power and eternal wisdom employ itself in giving directions how a priest's garment should be cut, and what sort of stuff they should be made of, and what their offerings should be, gold, and silver, and brass, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goat's hair, and rams' skins died red, and badger skins, &c. chap. xxv. ver. 3; and in one of the pretended prophecies I have just examined, God is made to give directions how they should kill, cook, and eat a he-lamb or a he-goat. And Ezekiel, chap. iv. to fill up the measure of abominable absurdity, makes God to order him to take "*wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches, and make a loaf or a cake thereof, and bake it with human dung and eat it;*" but as Ezekiel complained that this mess was too strong for his stomach, the matter was compromised from man's dung to cow dung, Ezekiel, chap. iv. Compare all this ribaldry, blasphemously called the word of God, with the Almighty power that created the universe, and whose eternal wisdom directs and governs all its mighty movements, and we shall be at a loss to find a name sufficiently contemptible for it.

In the promises which the Old Testament pretends that God made to his people, the same derogatory ideas of him prevail. It makes God to promise to Abraham, that his seed should be like the stars in heaven and the sand on the sea shore for multitude, and that he would give them the land of Canaan as their inheritance for ever. But observe, reader, how the performance of this promise was to begin, and then ask thine own reason, if the wisdom of God, whose power is equal to his will, could, consistently with that power and that wisdom, make such a promise.

The performance of the promise was to begin, according to that book, by four hundred years of bondage and affliction. Genesis, chap. xv. ver. 13. "*And God said unto Abraham, know of a surety, that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years.*" This promise, then, to Abraham, and his seed for ever, to inherit the land of Canaan, had it been a fact, instead of a fable, was to operate, in the commencement of it, as a curse upon all the people and their children, and their children's children for four hundred years.

But the case is, the Book of Genesis was written after the bondage in Egypt had taken place; and in order to get rid of the disgrace of the Lord's chosen people, as they called themselves, being in bondage to the Gentiles, they make God to be the author of it, and annex it as a condition to a pretended promise; as if God, in making that promise, had exceeded his power in performing it, and consequently his wisdom in making it, and was obliged to compromise with them for one half, and with the Egyptians, to whom they were to be in bondage, for the other half.

Without degrading my own reason by bringing those wretched and contemptible tales into a comparative view, with the Almighty power and eternal wisdom, which the Creator hath demonstrated to our senses in the creation of the universe, I will confine myself to say, that if we compare them with the divine and forcible sentiments of Cicero, the result will be, that the human mind has degenerated by believing them. Man in a state of grovelling superstition, from which he has not courage to rise, looses the energy of his mental powers.

I will not tire the reader with more observations on the Old Testament.

As to the New Testament, if it be brought and tried by that

standard, which, as Middleton wisely says, God has revealed to our senses of his Almighty power and wisdom in the creation and government of the visible universe, it will be found equally as false, paltry, and absurd, as the Old.

Without entering, in this place, into any other argument, that the story of Christ is of human invention, and not of divine origin, I will confine myself to show that it is derogatory to God, by the contrivance of it; because the means it supposes God to use, are not adequate to the end to be obtained; and, therefore, are derogatory to the Almightiness of his power, and the eternity of his wisdom.

The New Testament supposes that God sent his Son upon earth to make a new covenant with man; which the church calls *the covenant of Grace*, and to instruct mankind in a new doctrine, which it calls *Faith*, meaning thereby, not faith in God, for Cicero and all true Deists always had and always will have this; but faith in the person called Jesus Christ, and that whoever had not this faith should, to use the words of the New Testament, be DAMNED.

Now, if this were a fact, it is consistent with that attribute of God, called his *Goodness*, that no time should be lost in letting poor unfortunate man know it; and as that goodness was united to Almighty power, and that power to Almighty wisdom, all the means existed in the hand of the Creator to make it known immediately over the whole earth, in a manner suitable to the Almightiness of his divine nature, and with evidence that would not leave man in doubt; for it is always incumbent upon us, in all cases, to believe that the Almighty always acts, not by imperfect means as imperfect man acts, but consistently with his Almightiness. It is this only that can become the infallible criterion by which we can possibly distinguish the works of God from the works of man.

Observe now, reader, how the comparison between this supposed mission of Christ, on the belief or disbelief of which they say man was to be saved or damned—observe, I say, how the comparison between this and the Almighty power and wisdom of God demonstrated to our senses in the visible creation, goes on.

The Old Testament tells us that God created the heavens and the earth, and every thing therein, in six days. The term *six days* is ridiculous enough when applied to God; but leaving out that absurdity, it contains the idea of Almighty power acting

unitedly with Almighty wisdom, to produce an immense work, that of the creation of the universe and every thing therein, in a short time.

Now as the eternal salvation of man is of much greater importance than his creation, and as that salvation depends, as the New Testament tells us, on man's knowledge of, and belief in the person called Jesus Christ, it necessarily follows from our belief in the goodness and justice of God, and our knowledge of his almighty power and wisdom, as demonstrated in the creation, that ALL THIS, if true, would be made known to all parts of the world, in as little time at least, as was employed in making the world. To suppose the Almighty would pay greater regard and attention to the creation and organization of inanimate matter, than he would to the salvation of innumerable millions of souls, which himself had created, "*as the image of himself,*" is to offer an insult to his goodness and his justice.

Now observe, reader, how the promulgation of this pretended salvation by a knowledge of, and a belief in Jesus Christ went on, compared with the work of creation.

In the first place, it took longer time to make a child than to make the world, for nine months were passed away and totally lost in a state of pregnancy: which is more than forty times longer time than God employed in making the world, according to the Bible account. Secondly; several years of Christ's life were lost in a state of human infancy. But the universe was in maturity the moment it existed. Thirdly; Christ, as Luke asserts, was thirty years old before he began to preach what they call his mission. Millions of souls died in the mean time without knowing it. Fourthly; it was above three hundred years from that time before the book called the New Testament was compiled into a written copy, before which time there was no such book. Fifthly; it was above a thousand years after that, before it could be circulated; because neither Jesus nor his apostles had knowledge of, or were inspired with the art of printing: and, consequently, as the means for making it universally known did not exist, the means were not equal to the end, and, therefore, it is not the work of God.

I will here subjoin the nineteenth Psalm, which is truly deistical, to show how universally and instantaneously the works of

God make themselves known, compared with this pretended salvation by Jesus Christ.

Psalm 19th. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy work—Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge—There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard - Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a chamber for the sun. Which is a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race—his going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof."

Now, had the news of salvation by Jesus Christ been inscribed on the face of the Sun and the Moon, in characters that all nations would have understood the whole earth had known it in twenty-four hours, and all nations would have believed it; whereas, though it is now almost two thousand years since, as they tell us, Christ came upon earth, not a twentieth part of the people of the earth know any thing of it, and among those who do, the wiser part do not believe it.

I have now reader gone through all the passages called prophecies of Jesus Christ, and shown there is no such thing.

I have examined the story told of Jesus Christ, and compared the several circumstances of it with that revelation, which, as Middleton wisely says, God has made to us of his Power and Wisdom in the structure of the universe, and by which every thing ascribed to him is to be tried. The result is, that the story of Christ has not one trait, either in its character, or in the means employed, that bears the least resemblance to the power and wisdom of God, as demonstrated in the creation of the universe. All the means are human means, slow, uncertain, and inadequate to the accomplishment of the end proposed, and, therefore, the whole is a fabulous invention, and undeserving of credit.

The priests of the present day, profess to believe it. They gain their living by it, and they exclaim against something they call infidelity. I will define what it is. HE THAT BELIEVES IN THE STORY OF CHRIST IS AN INFIDEL TO GOD.

THOMAS PAINE.

APPENDIX.

CONTRADICTORY DOCTRINES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT,

BETWEEN

MATTHEW AND MARK.

In the New Testament, Mark, chap. xvi. ver. 16, it is said "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." This is making salvation, or, in other words, the happiness of man after this life, to depend entirely on believing, or on what Christians call faith.

But the 25th chapter of *The Gospel according to Matthew* makes Jesus Christ to preach a direct contrary doctrine to *The Gospel according to Mark;* for it makes salvation, or the future happiness of man, to depend entirely on *good works;* and those good works are not works done to God, for he needs them not, but good works done to man.

The passage referred to in Matthew is the account there given of what is called the last day, or the day of judgment, where the whole world is represented to be divided into two parts, the righteous and the unrighteous, mataphorically called the *sheep* and the *goats.*

To the one part called the righteous, or the sheep, it says, "Come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world—for I was an hungered and ye gave me meat—I was thirsty and ye gave me drink—I was a stranger and ye took me in—Naked and ye clothed me—I was sick and ye visited me—I was in prison and ye came unto me.

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered and fed thee, or thirsty and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger and took thee in, or naked and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick and in prison, and came unto thee?

"And the king shall answer and say unto them, *verily I say unto you in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*"

Here is nothing about believing in Christ—nothing about that phantom of the imagination called *Faith.* The works here spoken of, are works of humanity and benevolence, or, in other words, an endeavour to make God's creation happy. Here is nothing about preaching and making long prayers, as if God must be dictated to by man; nor about building churches and meetings, nor hiring priests to pray and preach in them. Here is nothing about predestination, that lust which some men have for damning one another. Here is nothing about baptism, whether by sprinkling or plunging, nor about any of those ceremonies for which the Christian church has been fighting, persecuting, and burning each other, ever since the Christian church began.

If it be asked, why do not priests preach the doctrine contained in this chapter? The answer is easy;—they are not fond of practising it themselves. It does not answer for their trade. They had rather get than give. Charity with them begins and ends at home.

Had it been said, *Come ye blessed, ye have been liberal in paying the preachers of the word, ye have contributed largely towards building churches and meeting-houses*, there is not a hired priest in Christendom but would have thundered it continually in the ears of his congregation. But as it is altogether on good works done to men, the priests pass over it in silence, and they will abuse me for bringing it into notice.

THOMAS PAINE.

MY

PRIVATE THOUGHTS

ON A

FUTURE STATE.

I HAVE said, in the first part of the Age of Reason, that "*I hope for happiness after this life.*" This hope is comfortable to me, and I presume not to go beyond the comfortable idea of hope, with respect to a future state.

I consider myself in the hands of my Creator, and that he will dispose of me after this life consistently with his justice and goodness. I leave all these matters to him, as my Creator and friend, and I hold it to be presumption in man to make an article of faith as to what the Creator will do with us hereafter.

I do not believe because a man and a woman make a child, that it imposes on the Creator the unavoidable obligation of keeping the being so made, in eternal existence hereafter. It is in his power to do so, or not to do so, and it is not in our power to decide which he will do.

The book called the New Testament, which I hold to be fabulous and have shown to be false, gives an account in the 25th chapter of Matthew, of what is there called the last day, or the day of judgment. The whole world, according to that account, is divided into two parts, the righteous and the unrighteous, figuratively called the sheep and the goats. They are then to receive their sentence. To the one, figuratively called the sheep, it says, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." To the other, figuratively called the goats, it says, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Now the case is, the world cannot be thus divided—the moral world, like the physical world, is composed of numerous degrees of character, running imperceptibly one into the other, in such a

manner that no fixed point of division can be found in either. That point is no where, or is every where. The whole world might be divided into two parts numerically, but not as to moral character; and, therefore, the metaphor of dividing them, as sheep and goats can be divided, whose difference is marked by their external figure, is absurd. All sheep are still sheep; all goats are still goats; it is their physical nature to be so. But one part of the world are not all good alike, nor the other part all wicked alike. There are some exceedingly good; others exceedingly wicked. There is another description of men who cannot be ranked with either the one or the other—they belong neither to the sheep nor the goats.

My own opinion is, that those whose lives have been spent in doing good, and endeavouring to make their fellow-mortals happy, for this is the only way in which we can serve God, *will be happy hereafter:* and that the very wicked will meet with some punishment. This is my opinion. It is consistent with my idea of God's justice, and with the reason that God has given me.

THOMAS PAINE.

EXTRACT FROM A REPLY

TO THE

BISHOP OF LLANDAFF.

[This extract from Mr. Pain's reply to Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, was given by him, not long before his death, to Mrs. Palmer, widow of Elihu Palmer. He retained the work entire, and, therefore, must have transcribed this part, which was unusual for him to do. Probably he had discovered errors, which he corrected in the copy. Mrs. Palmer presented it to the editor of a periodical work, entitled the Theophilanthropist, published in New-York, in which it appeared in 1810.]

GENESIS.

The bishop says, "the oldest book in the world is Genesis." This is mere assertion; he offers no proof of it, and I go to controvert it, and to show that the book of Job, which is not a Hebrew book, but is a book of the Gentiles, translated into Hebrew, is much older than the book of Genesis.

The book of Genesis means the book of Generations; to which are prefixed two chapters, the first and second, which contain two different cosmoganies, that is, two different accounts of the creation of the world, written by different persons, as I have shown in the preceding part of this work.*

The first cosmogany begins at the first verse of the first chapter, and ends at the end of the third verse of the second chapter; for the adverbial conjunction *thus*, with which the second chapter begins, shows those three verses to belong to the first chapter. The second cosmogany begins at the fourth verse of the second chapter, and ends with that chapter.

In the first cosmogany the name of God is used, without any

* See Letter to Erskine, page 165.

epithet joined to it, and is repeated thirty-five times. In the second cosmogany it is always the Lord God, which is repeated eleven times. These two different styles of expression show these two chapters to be the work of two different persons, and the contradictions they contain, show they cannot be the work of one and the same person, as I have already shown.

The third chapter, in which the style of Lord God is continued in every instance, except in the supposed conversation between the woman and the serpent (for in every place in that chapter where the writer speaks, it is always the Lord God) shows this chapter to belong to the second cosmogany.

This chapter gives an account of what is called the fall of man, which is no other than a fable borrowed from, and constructed upon the religion of Zoroaster, or the Persians, or the annual progress of the sun through the twelve signs of the Zodiac. It is the *fall of the year*, the approach and *evil* of winter, announced by the ascension of the autumnal constellation of the *serpent* of the Zodiac, and not the moral *fall of man* that is the key of the allegory, and of the fable in Genesis borrowed from it.

The fall of man in Genesis, is said to have been produced by eating a certain fruit, generally taken to be an apple. The fall of the year is the season for the gathering and eating the new apples of that year. The allegory, therefore, holds with respect to the fruit, which it would not have done had it been an early summer fruit. It holds also with respect to place. The tree is said to have been placed in the *midst* of the garden. But why in the midst of the garden more than in any other place? The situation of the allegory gives the answer to this question, which is, that the fall of the year, when apples and other autumnal fruits are ripe, and when days and nights are of equal length, is the mid-season between summer and winter.

It holds also with respect to clothing, and the temperature of the air. It is said in Genesis. chap. iii. ver. 21. "*Unto Adam and his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins and clothed them.*" But why are coats of skins mentioned? This cannot be understood as referring to any thing of the nature of *moral evil.* The solution of the allegory gives again the answer to this question, which is, that the *evil of winter*, which follows the *fall of the year*, fabulously called in Genesis the *fall of man*, makes warm clothing necessary.

But of these things I shall speak fully when I come in another part to treat of the ancient religion of the Persians, and compare it with the modern religion of the New Testament.* At present, I shall confine myself to the comparative antiquity of the books of Genesis and Job, taking, at the same time, whatever I may find in my way with respect to the fabulousness of the book of Genesis; for if what is called the fall of man, in Genesis, be fabulous or allegorical, that which is called the redemption, in the New Testament, cannot be a fact. It is morally impossible, and impossible also in the nature of things, that *moral good* can redeem *physical evil.* I return to the bishop.

If Genesis be, as the bishop asserts, the oldest book in the world, and, consequently, the oldest and first written book of the Bible, and if the extraordinary things related in it, such as the creation of the world in six days, the tree of life, and of good and evil, the story of Eve and the talking serpent, the fall of man and his being turned out of Paradise, were facts, or even believed by the Jews to be facts, they would be referred to as fundamental matters, and that very frequently, in the books of the Bible that were written by various authors afterwards; whereas, there is not a book, chapter, or verse of the Bible, from the time Moses is said to have written the book of Genesis, to the book of Malachi, the last book in the Bible, including a space of more than a thousand years, in which there is any mention made of these things, or any of them, nor are they so much as alluded to. How will the bishop solve this difficulty, which stands as a circumstantial contradiction to his assertion?

There are but two ways of solving it:

First, that the book of Genesis is not an ancient book; that it has been written by some (now) unknown person, after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, about a thousand years after the time that Moses is said to have lived, and put as a preface or introduction to the other books, when they were formed into a cannon in the time of the second temple, and, therefore, not having existed before that time, none of these things mentioned in it could be referred to in those books.

Secondly, that admitting Genesis to have been written by Moses, the Jews did not believe the things stated in it to be true, and, therefore as they could not refer to them as facts, they would

* Not published.

not refer to them as fables. The first of these solutions goes against the antiquity of the book, and the second against its authenticity, and the bishop may take which he pleases.

But, be the author of Genesis whoever he may, there is abundant evidence to show, as well from the early Christian writers, as from the Jews themselves, that the things stated in that book were not believed to be facts. Why they have been believed as facts since that time, when better and fuller knowledge existed on the case, than is known now, can be accounted for only on the imposition of priestcraft.

Augustine, one of the early champions of the Christian church, acknowledges in his *City of God*, that the adventure of Eve and the serpent, and the account of Paradise, were generally considered as fiction, or allegory. He regards them as allegory himself, without attempting to give any explanation, but he supposes that a better explanation might be found than those that had been offered.

Origen, another early champion of the church, says, "What man of good sense can ever persuade himself that there were a first, a second, and a third day, and that each of these days had a night when there were yet neither sun, moon, nor stars. What man can be stupid enough to believe that God acting the part of a gardener, had planted a garden in the east, that the tree of life was a real tree, and that its fruit had the virtue of making those who eat of it live for ever?"

Marmonides, one of the most learned and celebrated of the Jewish Rabbins, who lived in the eleventh century (about seven or eight hundred years ago) and to whom the bishop refers in his answer to me, is very explicit, in his book entitled *More Nebachim*, upon the non-reality of the things stated in the account of the Creation in the book of Genesis.

"We ought not (says he) to understand, nor take according to the letter, that which is written in the book of the Creation, nor to have the same ideas of it with common men; otherwise, our ancient sages would not have recommended, with so much care, to conceal the sense of it, and not to raise the allegorical veil which envelopes the truths it contains. The book of Genesis, taken according to the letter, gives the most absurd and the most extravagant ideas of the Divinity. Whoever shall find out the sense of it, ought to restrain himself from divulging it. It is a maxim

which all our sages repeat, and above all with respect to the work of six days. It may happen that some one, with the aid he may borrow from others, may hit upon the meaning of it. In that case he ought to impose silence upon himself; or if he speak of it, he ought to speak obscurely, and in an enigmatical manner, as I do myself, leaving the rest to be found out by those who can understand."

This is, certainly, a very extraordinary declaration of Marmonides, taking all the parts of it.

First, he declares, that the account of the Creation in the book of Genesis is not a fact; that to believe it to be a fact, gives the most absurd and the most extravagant ideas of the Divinity.

Secondly, that it is an allegory.

Thirdly, that the allegory has a concealed secret.

Fourthly, that whoever can find the secret ought not to tell it.

It is this last part that is the most extraordinary. Why all this care of the Jewish Rabbins, to prevent what they call the concealed meaning, or the secret, from being known, and, if known, to prevent any of their people from telling it? It certainly must be something which the Jewish nation are afraid or ashamed the world should know. It must be something personal to them as a people, and not a secret of a divine nature, which the more it is known, the more it increases the glory of the Creator, and the gratitude and happiness of man. It is not God's secret, but their own, they are keeping. I go to unveil the secret.

The case is, the Jews have stolen their cosmogany, that is, their account of the Creation, from the cosmogany of the Persians, contained in the book of Zoroaster, the Persian lawgiver, and brought it with them when they returned from captivity by the benevolence of Cyrus, King of Persia; for it is evident, from the silence of all the books of the Bible upon the subject of the Creation, that the Jews had no cosmogany before that time. If they had a cosmogany from the time of Moses, some of their judges who governed during more than four hundred years, or of their kings, the Davids and Solomons of their day, who governed nearly fiv hundred years, or of their prophets and psalmists, who lived in the mean time, would have mentioned it. It would, either as fact or fable, have been the grandest of all subjects for a psalm. It would have suited to a tittle the ranting, poetical genius of Isaiah, or served as a cordial to the gloomy Jeremiah. But not

one word nor even a whisper, does any of the Bible authors give upon the subject.

To conceal the theft, the Rabbins of the second temple have published Genesis as a book of Moses, and have enjoined secresy to all their people, who, by travelling, or otherwise, might happen to discover from whence the cosmogany was borrowed, not to tell it. The evidence of circumstances is often unanswerable, and there is no other than this which I have given, that goes to the whole of the case, and this does.

Diogenes Laertius, an ancient and respectable author, whom the Bishop, in his answer to me, quotes on another occasion, has a passage that corresponds with the solution here given. In speaking of the religion of the Persians, as promulgated by their priests or magi, he says, the Jewish Rabbins were the successors of their doctrine. Having thus spoken on the plagarism, and on the non-reality of the book of Genesis, I will give some additional evidence that Moses is not the author of that book.

Eben-Ezra, a celebrated Jewish author, who lived about seven hundred years ago, and whom the bishop allows to have been a man of great erudition, has made a great many observations, too numerous to be repeated here, to show that Moses was not, and could not be, the author of the book of Genesis, nor any of the five books that bear his name.

Spinosa, another learned Jew, who lived about a hundred and thirty years ago, recites, in his treatise on the ceremonies of the Jews, ancient and modern, the observations of Eben-Ezra, to which he adds many others, to show that Moses is not the author of these books. He also says, and shows his reasons for saying it, that the Bible did not exist as a book, till the time of the Maccabees, which was more than a hundred years after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity.

In the second part of the Age of Reason, I have, among other things, referred to nine verses in the 36th chapter of Genesis, beginning at the 31st verse, "These are the kings that reigned in Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel," which it is impossible could have been written by Moses, or in the time of Moses, and could not have been written till after the Jew kings began to reign in Israel, which was not till several hundred years after the time of Moses.

The bishop allows this, and says "I think you say true." But

he then quibbles, and says, that a small addition to a book does not destroy either the genuineness or authenticity of the whole book. This is priestcraft. These verses do not stand in the book as an addition to it, but as making a part of the whole book, and which it is impossible that Moses could write. The bishop would reject the antiquity of any other book if it could be proved from the words of the book itself that a part of it could not have been written till several hundred years after the reputed author of it was dead. He would call such a book a forgery. I am authorised, therefore, to call the book of Genesis a forgery.

Combining, then, all the foregoing circumstances together respecting the antiquity and authenticity of the book of Genesis, a conclusion will naturally follow therefrom; those circumstances are,

First, that certain parts of the book cannot possibly have been written by Moses, and that the other parts carry no evidence of having been written by him.

Secondly, the universal silence of all the following books of the Bible, for about a thousand years, upon the extraordinary things spoken of in Genesis, such as the creation of the world in six days —the garden of Eden—the tree of knowledge—the tree of life—the story of Eve and the serpent—the fall of man, and his being turned out of this fine garden, together with Noah's flood, and the tower of Babel.

Thirdly, the silence of all the books of the Bible upon even the name of Moses, from the book of Joshua until the second book of Kings, which was not written till after the captivity, for it gives an account of the captivity, a period of about a thousand years. Strange that a man who is proclaimed as the historian of the Creation, the privy-counsellor and confident of the Almighty—the legislator of the Jewish nation, and the founder of its religion; strange, I say, that even the name of such a man should not find a place in their books for a thousand years, if they knew or believed any thing about him, or the books he is said to have written.

Fourthly, the opinion of some of the most celebrated of the Jewish commentators, that Moses is not the author of the book of Genesis, founded on the reasons given for that opinion.

Fifthly, the opinion of the early Christian writers, and of the great champion of Jewish literature, Marmonides, that the book of Genesis is not a book of facts.

Sixthly, the silence imposed by all the Jewish Rabbins, and by Marmonides himself, upon the Jewish nation, not to speak of any thing they may happen to know, or discover, respecting the cosmogany (or creation of the world) in the book of Genesis.

From these circumstances the following conclusions offer—

First, that the book of Genesis is not a book of facts.

Secondly, that as no mention is made throughout the Bible of any of the extraordinary things related in Genesis, that it has not been written till after the other books were written, and put as a preface to the Bible. Every one knows that a preface to a book, though it stands first, is the last written.

Thirdly, that the silence imposed by all the Jewish Rabbins, and by Marmonides upon the Jewish nation, to keep silence upon every thing related in their cosmogany, evinces a secret, they are not willing should be known. The secret, therefore, explains itself to be, that when the Jews were in captivity in Babylon and Persia, they became acquainted with the cosmogany of the Persians, as registered in the Zend-Avesta, of Zoroaster, the Persian lawgiver, which, after their return from captivity, they manufactered and modelled as their own, and anti-dated it by giving to it the name of Moses. The case admits of no other explanation. From all which it appears that the book of Genesis, instead of being the *oldest book in the world*, as the bishop calls it, has been the last written book of the Bible, and that the cosmogany it contains, has been manufactured.

On the Names in the Book of Genesis.

Every thing in Genesis serves as evidence or symptom, that the book has been composed in some late period of the Jewish nation. Even the names mentioned in it serve to this purpose.

Nothing is more common or more natural, than to name the children of succeeding generations, after the names of those who had been celebrated in some former generation. This holds good with respect to all the people, and all the histories we know of, and it does not hold good with the Bible. There must be some cause for this.

This book of Genesis tells us of a man whom it calls Adam, and of his sons Abel and Seth; of Enoch, who lived 365 years (it is exactly the number of days in a year,) and that then God took

it has the appearance of being taken from some allegory of the Gentiles on the commencement and termination of the year, by the progress of the sun through the twelve signs of the Zodiac, on which the allegorical religion of the Gentiles was founded.

It tells us of Methuselah who lived 969 years, and of a long train of other names in the fifth chapter. It then passes on to a man whom it calls Noah, and his sons, Shem, Ham, and Japhet: then to Lot, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and his sons, with which the book of Genesis finishes.

All these, according to the account given in that book, were the most extraordinary and celebrated of men. They were, moreover, heads of families. Adam was the father of the world. Enoch, for his righteousness, was taken up to heaven. Methuselah lived to almost a thousand years. He was the son of Enoch, the man of 365, the number of days in a year. It has the appearance of being the continuation of an allegory on the 365 days of a year, and its abundant productions. Noah was selected from all the world to be preserved when it was drowned, and became the second father of the world. Abraham was the father of the faithful multitude. Isaac and Jacob were the inheritors of his fame, and the last was the father of the twelve tribes.

Now, if these very wonderful men and their names, and the book that records them, had been known by the Jews, before the Babylonian captivity, those names would have been as common among the Jews before that period as they have been since. We now hear of thousands of Abrahams, Isaacs, and Jacobs among the Jews, but there were none of that name before the Babylonian captivity. The Bible does not mention one, though from the time that Abraham is said to have lived, to the time of the Babylonian captivity, is about 1400 years.

How is it to be accounted for, that there have been so many thousands, and perhaps hundreds of thousands of Jews of the names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob since that period, and not one before? It can be accounted for but one way, which is, that before the Babylonian captivity, the Jews had no such books as Genesis, nor knew any thing of the names and persons it mentions, nor of the things it relates, and that the stories in it have been manufactured since that time. From the Arabic

name *Ibrahim* (which is the manner the Turks write that name to this day) the Jews have most probably manufactured their Abraham.

I will advance my observations a point further, and speak of the names of *Moses* and *Aaron*, mentioned for the first time in the book of Exodus. There are now, and have continued to be from the time of the Babylonian captivity, or soon after it, thousands of Jews of the names of *Moses* and *Aaron*, and we read not of any of that name before that time. The Bible does not mention one. The direct inference from this is, that the Jews knew of no such book as Exodus, before the Babylonian captivity. In fact, that it did not exist before that time, and that it is only since the book has been invented, that the names of *Moses* and *Aaron* have been common among the Jews.

It is applicable to the purpose, to observe, that the picturesque work, called *Mosaic-work*, spelled the same as you would say the *Mosaic* account of the creation, is not derived from the word *Moses* but from *Muses*, (the *Muses*,) because of the variegated and picturesque pavement in the temples dedicated to the *Muses*. This carries a strong implication that the name *Moses* is drawn from the same source, and that he is not a real but an allegorical person, as Marmonides describes what is called the *Mosaic* account of the Creation to be.

I will go a point still further. The Jews now know the book of Genesis, and the names of all the persons mentioned in the first *ten chapters* of that book, from Adam to Noah: yet we do not hear (I speak for myself) of any Jew of the present day, of the name of Adam, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah,* Shem, Ham, or Japhet, (names mentioned in the first ten chapters,) though these were, according to the account in that book, the most extraordinary of all the names that make up the catalogue of the Jewish chronology.

The names the Jews now adopt, are those that are mentioned in Genesis after the tenth chapter, as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, &c. How then does it happen, that they do not adopt the names found in the first ten chapters? Here is evidently a line of division drawn between the first ten chapters of Genesis, and the remaining chapters, with respect to the adoption of names. There

* Noah is an exception; there are of that name among the Jews.—EDITOR.

must be some cause for this, and I go to offer a solution of the problem.

The reader will recollect the quotation I have already made from the Jewish Rabbin, Marmonides, wherein he says, "We ought not to understand nor to take according to the letter that which is written in the book of the Creation. It is a maxim (says he) which all our sages repeat *above all*, with respect to the work of six days."

The qualifying expression *above all*, implies there are other parts of the book, though not so important, that ought not to be understood or taken according to the letter, and as the Jews do not adopt the names mentioned in the first ten chapters, it appears evident those chapters are included in the injunction not to take them in a literal sense, or according to the letter; from which it follows, that the persons or characters mentioned in the first ten chapters, as Adam, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, and so on to Noah, are not real but fictitious or allegorical persons, and, therefore, the Jews do not adopt their names into their families. If they affixed the same idea of reality to them as they do to those that follow after the tenth chapter, the names of Adam, Abel, Seth, &c. would be as common among the Jews of the present day, as are those of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Aaron.

In the superstition they have been in, scarcely a Jew family would have been without an *Enoch*, as a presage of his going to heaven as ambassador for the whole family. Every mother who wished that the *days* of her son *might be long in the land* would call him *Methuselah*; and all the Jews that might have to traverse the ocean would be named Noah, as a charm against shipwreck and drowning.

This is domestic evidence against the book of Genesis, which joined to the several kinds of evidence before recited, show the book of Genesis not to be older than the Babylonian captivity, and to be fictitious. I proceed to fix the character and antiquity of the book of

JOB.

The book of Job has not the least appearance of being a book of the Jews, and though printed among the books of the Bible, does not belong to it. There is no reference in it to any Jewish

law or ceremony. On the contrary, all the internal evidence it contains shows it to be a book of the Gentiles, either of Persia or Chaldea.

The name of Job does not appear to be a Jewish name. There is no Jew of that name in any of the books of the Bible, neither is there now that I ever heard of. The country where Job is said or supposed to have lived, or rather where the scene of the drama is laid, is called Uz, and there was no place of that name ever belonging to the Jews. If Uz is the same as Ur, it was in Chaldea, the country of the Gentiles.

The Jews can give no account how they came by this book, nor who was the author, nor the time when it was written. Origen, in his work against Celsus, (in the first ages of the Christian church,) says, *that the book of Job is older than Moses.* Eben-Ezra, the Jewish commentator, whom (as I have before said) the bishop allows to have been a man of great erudition, and who certainly understood his own language, says, that the book of Job has been translated from another language into Hebrew. Spinosa, another Jewish commentator of great learning, confirms the opinion of Eben-Ezra, and says moreover, "*Je crois que Job etait Gentie;** I believe that Job was a Gentile.

The bishop, (in his answer to me,) says, "that the structure of the whole book of Job, in whatever light of history or drama it be considered, is founded on the belief that prevailed with the Persians and Chaldeans, and other Gentile nations, of a good and an evil spirit."

In speaking of the good and evil spirit of the Persians, the bishop writes them *Arimanius* and *Oromasdes.* I will not dispute about the orthography, because I know that translated names are differently spelled in different languages. But he has nevertheless made a capital error. He has put the Devil first; for Arimanius, or, as it is more generally written, *Ahriman*, is the *evil spirit*, and *Oromasdes* or *Ormusd* the good spirit. He has made the same mistake in the same paragraph, in speaking of the good and evil spirit of the ancient Egyptians *Osiris* and *Typho*, he puts Typho before Osiris. The error is just the same as if the bishop in writing about the Christian religion, or in preaching a sermon, were to say the *Devil* and *God.* A priest ought to know

* Spinosa on the ceremonies of the Jews, page 296, published in French at Amsterdam, 1678.

his own trade better. We agree, however, about the structure of the book of Job, that it is Gentile. I have said in the second part of the Age of Reason, and given my reasons for it, that *the drama of it is not Hebrew.*

From the testimonies I have cited, that of Origen, who, about fourteen hundred years ago, said that the book of Job was more ancient than Moses, that of Eben-Ezra, who, in his commentary on Job, says, it has been translated from another language (and consequently from a Gentile language) into Hebrew; that of Spinosa, who not only says the same thing, but that the author of it was a Gentile; and that of the bishop, who says that the structure of the whole book is Gentile. It follows then in the first place, that the book of Job is not a book of the Jews originally.

Then, in order to determine to what people or nation any book of religion belongs, we must compare it with the leading dogmas and precepts of that people or nation; and, therefore, upon the bishop's own construction, the book of Job belongs either to the ancient Persians, the Chaldeans, or the Egyptians; because the structure of it is consistent with the dogma they held, that of a good and evil spirit, called in Job, *God* and *Satan*, existing as distinct and separate beings, and it is not consistent with any dogma of the Jews.

The belief of a good and an evil spirit, existing as distinct and separate beings, is not a dogma to be found in any of the books of the Bible. It is not till we come to the New Testament that we hear of any such dogma. There the person called the Son of God, holds conversation with Satan on a mountain, as familiarly as is represented in the drama of Job. Consequently the bishop cannot say, in this respect, that the New Testament is founded upon the Old. According to the Old, the God of the Jews was the God of every thing. All good and evil came from him. According to Exodus it was God, and not the Devil, that hardened Pharoah's heart. According to the book of Samuel, it was an evil spirit from God that troubled Saul. And Ezekiel makes God to say, in speaking of the Jews, "*I gave them the statutes that were not good, and judgments by which they should not live.*" The Bible describes the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in such a contradictory manner, and under such a two fold character, there would be no knowing when he was in earnest and when in

irony; when to believe, and when not. As to the precepts, principles, and maxims, in the book of Job, they show that the people, abusively called the heathen in the books of the Jews, had the most sublime ideas of the Creator, and the most exalted devotional morality. It was the Jews who dishonoured God. It was the Gentiles who glorified him. As to the fabulous personifications introduced by the Greek and Latin poets, it was a corruption of the ancient religion of the Gentiles, which consisted in the adoration of a first cause of the works of the creation, in which the sun was the great visible agent.

It appears to have been a religion of gratitude and adoration, and not of prayer and discontented solicitation. In Job we find adoration and submission, but not prayer. Even the ten commandments enjoin not prayer. Prayer has been added to devotion, by the church of Rome, as the instrument of fees and perquisites. All prayers by the priests of the Christian church, whether public or private, must be paid for. It may be right, individually, to pray for virtues, or mental instruction, but not for things. It is an attempt to dictate to the Almighty in the government of the world. But to return to the book of Job.

As the book of Job decides itself to be a book of the Gentiles, the next thing is to find out to what particular nation it belongs, and lastly, what is its antiquity.

As a composition, it is sublime, beautiful, and scientific: full of sentiment, and abounding in grand metaphorical description. As a drama, it is regular. The dramatis personæ, the persons performing the several parts, are regularly introduced, and speak without interruption or confusion. The scene, as I have before said, is laid in the country of the Gentiles, and the unities, though not always necessary in a drama, are observed here as strictly as the subject would admit.

In the last act, where the Almighty is introduced as speaking from the whirlwind, to decide the controversy between Job and his friends, it is an idea as grand as poetical imagination can conceive. What follows of Job's future prosperity does not belong to it as a drama. It is an epilogue of the writer, as the first verses of the first chapter, which gave an account of Job, his country and his riches, are the prologue.

The book carries the appearance of being the work of some of the Persian Magi, not only because the structure of it corresponds

to the dogmas of the religion of those people, as founded by Zoroaster, but from the astronomical references in it to the constellations of the zodiac and other objects in the heavens, of which the sun, in their religion called Mithra, was the chief. Job, in describing the power of God, (Job ix. v. 27,) says, "Who commandeth the sun, and it riseth not, and sealeth up the stars—who alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea —who maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south." All this astronomical allusion is consistent with the religion of the Persians.

Establishing then the book of Job, as the work of some of the Persian, or Eastern Magi, the case naturally follows, that when the Jews returned from captivity, by the permission of Cyrus, king of Persia; they brought this book with them: had it translated into Hebrew, and put into their scriptural canons, which were not formed till after their return. This will account for the name of Job being mentioned in Ezekiel, (*Ezekiel, chap.* xiv. *v.* 14,) who was one of the captives, and also for its not being mentioned in any book said or supposed to have been written before the captivity.

Among the astronomical allusions in the book, there is one which serves to fix its antiquity. It is that where God is made to say to Job, in the style of reprimand, "*Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades.*" (Chap. xxxviii. ver. 31.) As the explanation of this depends upon astronomical calculation, I will, for the sake of those who would not otherwise understand it, endeavour to explain it as clearly as the subject will admit.

The Pleiades are a cluster of pale, milky stars, about the size of a man's hand, in the constellation Taurus, or in English, the Bull. It is one of the constellations of the zodiac, of which there are twelve, answering to the twelve months of the year. The Pleiades are visible in the winter nights, but not in the summer nights, being then below the horizon.

The zodiac is an imaginary belt or circle in the heavens, eighteen degrees broad, in which the sun apparently makes his annual course, and in which all the planets move. When the sun appears to our view to be between us and the group of stars forming such or such a constellation, he is said to be in that constellation. Consequently the constellation he appears to be in, in the summer, are directly opposite to those he appeared in in the winter, and the same with respect to spring and autumn.

The zodiac, besides being divided into twelve constellations, is also, like every other circle, great or small, divided into 360 equal parts, called degrees; consequently each constellation contains 30 degrees. The constellations of the zodiac are generally called signs, to distinguish them from the consteliations that are placed out of the zodiac, and this is the name I shall now use.

The precession of the equinoxes is the part most difficult to explain, and it is on this that the explanation chiefly depends.

The equinoxes correspond to the two seasons of the year when he sun makes equal day and night.

The following is a disconnected part of the same work, and is now (1824) first published.

SABBATH, OR SUNDAY.

The seventh day, or more properly speaking the period of seven days, was originally a numerical division of time and nothing more; and had the bishop been acquainted with the history of astronomy, he would have known this. The annual revolution of the earth makes what we call a year.

The year is artificially divided into months, the months into weeks of seven days, the days into hours, &c. The period of seven days, like any other of the artificial divisions of the year, is only a fractional part thereof, contrived for the convenience of countries.

It is ignorance, imposition, and priest-craft, that have called it otherwise. They might as well talk of the Lord's month, of the Lord's week, of the Lord's hour, as of the Lord's day. All time is his, and no part of it is more holy or more sacred than another. It is, however, necessary to the trade of a priest, that he should preach up a distinction of days.

Before the science of astronomy was studied and carried to the degree of eminence to which it was by the Egyptians and Chaldeans, the people of those times had no other helps, than what com-

mon observation of the very visible changes of the sun and moon afforded, to enable them to keep an account of the progress of time. As far as history establishes the point, the Egyptians were the first people who divided the year into twelve months. Herodotus, who lived above two thousand two hundred years ago, and is the most ancient historian whose works have reached our time, says, *they did this by the knowledge they had of the stars.* As to the Jews, there is not one single improvement in any science or in any scientific art, that they ever produced. They were the most ignorant of all the illiterate world. If the word of the Lord had come to them, as they pretend, and as the bishop professes to believe, and that they were to be the harbingers of it to the rest of the world; the Lord would have taught them the use of letters, and the art of printing; for without the means of communicating the word, it could not be communicated; whereas letters were the invention of the Gentile world; and printing of the modern world. But to return to my subject—

Before the helps which the science of astronomy afforded, the people as before said, had no other, whereby to keep an account of the progress of time, than what the common and very visible changes of the sun and moon afforded. They saw that a great number of days made a year, but the account of them was too tedious, and too difficult to be kept numerically, from one to three hundred and sixty-five; neither did they know the true time of a solar year. It, therefore, became necessary, for the purpose of marking the progress of days, to put them into small parcels, such as are now called weeks; and which consisted as they now do of seven days. By this means the memory was assisted as it is with us at this day; for we do not say of any thing that is past, that it was fifty, sixty, or seventy days ago, but that it was so many weeks, or, if longer time, so many months. It is impossible to keep an account of time without helps of this kind.

Julian Scaliger, the inventer of the Julian period of 7,980 years, produced by multiplying the cycle of the moon, the cycle of the sun, and the years of an indiction, 19, 28, 15, into each other; says, that the custom of reckoning by periods of seven days was used by the Assyrians, the Egyptians, the Hebrews, the people of India, the Arabs, and by all the nations of the east.

In addition to what Scaliger says, it is evident that in Britain, in Germany, and the north of Europe, they reckoned by periods of

seven days, long before the book called the bible, was known in those parts; and, consequently, that they did not take that mode of reckoning from any thing written in that book.

That they reckoned by periods of seven days is evident from their having seven names and no more for the several days; and which have not the most distant relation to any thing in the book of Genesis, or to that which is called the fourth commandment.

Those names are still retained in England, with no other alteration than what has been produced by moulding the Saxon and Danish languages into modern English.

1. Sun-day from *Sunne* the sun, and *dag*, day, Saxon. *Sondag*, Danish. The day dedicated to the sun.

2. Monday, that is, moonday, from *Mona*, the moon, Saxon. *Moano*, Danish. Day dedicated to the moon.

3. Tuesday, that is *Tuis-co's-day*. The day dedicated to the Idol *Tuisco*.

4. Wednes-day, that is Woden's-day. The day dedicated to *Woden*, the mars of the Germans.

5. Thursday, that is, Thor's-day dedicated to the Idol *Thor*.

6. Friday, that is *Friga's-day*. The day dedicated to *Friga*, the Venus of the Saxons.

Saturday from *Seaten* (*Saturn*) an Idol of the Saxons; one of the emblems representing time, which continually terminates and renews itself: The last day of the period of seven days. When we see a certain mode of reckoning general among nations totally unconnected, differing from each other in religion and in government, and some of them unknown to each other, we may be certain that it arises from some natural and common cause, prevailing alike over all, and which strikes every one in the same manner. Thus all nations have reckoned arithmetically by tens, because the people of all nations have ten fingers. If they had more or less than ten, the mode of arithmetical reckoning would have followed that number, for the fingers are a natural numeration table to all the world. I now come to show why the period of seven days is so generally adopted.

Though the sun is the great luminary of the world, and the animating cause of all the fruits of the earth, the moon by renewing herself more than twelve times oftener than the sun, which does it but once a year, served the rustic world as a natural almanac, as the fingers served it for a numeration table. All the world could

see the moon, her changes, and her monthly revolutions; and their mode of reckoning time, was accommodated as nearly as could possibly be done in round numbers, to agree with the changes of that planet, their natural almanac.

The moon performs her natural revolution round the earth in twenty-nine days and a half. She goes from a new moon to a half moon, to a full moon, to a half moon gibbous or convex, and then to a new moon again. Each of these changes is performed in seven days and nine hours; but seven days is the nearest division in round numbers that could be taken; and this was sufficient to suggest the universal custom of reckoning by periods of seven days, since it is impossible to reckon time without some stated period.

How the odd hours could be disposed of without interfering with the regular periods of seven days, in case the ancients recommenced a new Septenary period with every new moon, required no more difficulty than it did to regulate the Egyptian Calender afterwards of twelve months of thirty days each, or the odd hour in the Julian Calender, or the odd days and hours in the French Calendar. In all cases it is done by the addition of complementary days; and it can be done in no otherwise.

The bishop knows that as the Solar year does not end at the termination of what we call a day, but runs some hours into the next day, as the quarters of the Moon runs some hours beyond seven days; that it is impossible to give the year any fixed number of days, that will not in course of years become wrong, and make a complimentary time necessary to keep the nominal year parallel with the solar year. The same must have been the case with those who regulated time formerly by lunar revolutions. They would have to add three days to every second moon, or in that proportion, in order to make the new moon and the new week commence together like the nominal year and the solar year

Diodorus of Sicily, who, as before said, lived before Christ was born, in giving an account of times much anterior to his own, speaks of years, of three months, of four months, and of six months. These could be of no other than years composed of lunar revolutions, and, therefore, to bring the several periods of seven days, to agree with such years there must have been complementary days.

The moon was the first almanac the world knew; and the only one which the face of the heavens afforded to common spectators.

Her changes and her revolutions have entered into all the Calenders that have been known in the known world.

The division of the year into twelve months, which, as before shown, was first done by the Egyptians, though arranged with astronomical knowledge, had reference to the twelve moons, or more properly speaking, to the twelve lunar revolutions that appear in the space of a solar year; as the period of seven days had reference to one revolution of the moon. The feasts of the Jews were, and those of the Christian church still are, regulated by the moon. The Jews observed the feasts of the new moon and full moon, and, therefore, the period of seven days was necessary to them.

All the feasts of the Christian church are regulated by the moon. That called Easter governs all the rest, and the moon governs Easter. It is always the first Sunday after the first full moon that happens after the vernal Equinox, or 21st of March.

In proportion as the science of astronomy was studied and improved by the Egyptians and Chaldeans, and the solar year regulated by astronomical observations, the custom of reckoning by lunar revolutions became of less use, and in time discontinued. But such is the harmony of all parts of the machinery of the universe, that a calculation made from the motion of one part will correspond with the motion of some other.

The period of seven days deduced from the revolution of the moon round the earth, corresponded nearer than any other period of days would do to the revolution of the earth round the sun. Fifty-two periods of seven days make 364, which is within one day and some odd hours of a solar year; and there is no other periodical number that will do the same, till we come to the number thirteen, which is too great for common use, and the numbers before seven are too small. The custom, therefore, of reckoning by periods of seven days, as best suited to the revolution of the moon, applied with equal convenience to the solar year, and became united with it. But the decimal division of time, as regulated by the French Calendar, is superior to every other method.

There is no part of the Bible that is supposed to have been written by persons who lived before the time of Josiah, (which was a thousand years after the time of Moses,) that mentions any thing about the sabbath as a day consecrated to that which is called the fourth commandment, or that the Jews kept any such day. Had any such day been kept, during the thousand years of which I am

speaking, it certainly would have been mentioned frequently ; and that it should never be mentioned, is strong, presumptive, and circumstantial evidence that no such day was kept. But mention is often made of the feasts of the new-moon, and of the full-moon ; for the Jews, as before shown, worshipped the moon ; and the word *sabbath* was applied by the Jews to the feasts of that planet, and to those of their other deities. It is said in Hosea, chap. 2, verse 11, in speaking of the Jewish nation, " And I will cause all her mirth to cease, her feast-days, her *new-moons*, and her *sabbaths*, and all her solemn feasts." Nobody will be so foolish as to contend that the *sabbaths* here spoken of are Mosaic sabbaths. The construction of the verse implies they are lunar sabbaths, or sabbaths of the moon. It ought also to be observed that Hosea lived in the time of Ahaz and Hezekiah, about seventy years before the time of Josiah, when the law called the law of Moses is said to have been found ; and, consequently, the, sabbaths that Hosea speaks of are sabbaths of the Idolatry.

When those priestly reformers, (impostors I should call them,) Hilkiah, Ezra, and Nehemiah, began to produce books under the name of the books of Moses, they found the word *sabbath* in use : and as to the period of seven days, it is, like numbering arithmetically by tens, from time immemorial. But having found them in use, they continued to make them serve to the support of their new imposition. They trumped up a story of the creation being made in six days, and of the Creator resting on the seventh, to suit with the lunar and chronological period of seven days ; and they manufactured a commandment to agree with both. Impostors always work in this manner. They put fables for originals, and causes for effects.

There is scarcely any part of science, or any thing in nature, which those impostors and blasphemers of science, called priests, as well Christians as Jews, have not, at some time or other, perverted, or sought to pervert to the purpose of superstition and falsehood. Every thing wonderful in appearance, has been ascribed to angels, to devils, or to saints. Every thing ancient has some legendary tale annexed to it. The common opperations of nature have not escaped their practice of corrupting every thing.

FUTURE STATE.

The idea of a future state was an universal idea to all nations except the Jews. At the time and long before Jesus Christ and the men called his disciples were born, it had been sublimely treated of by Cicero in his book on old age, by Plato, Socrates, Xenophon, and other of the ancient theologists, whom the abusive Christian church calls heathen. Xenophon represents the elder Cyrus speaking after this manner ;—

" Think not, my dearest children, that when I depart from you, I shall be no more : but remember that my soul, even while I lived among you, was invisible to you ; yet by my actions you were sensible it existed in this body. Believe it therefore existing still, though it be still unseen. How quickly would the honors of illustrious men perish after death, if their souls performed nothing to preserve their fame? For my own part, I could never think that the soul, while in a mortal body, lives, but when departed from it dies ; or that its consciousness is lost, when it is discharged out of an unconscious habitation. But when it is freed from all corporeal alliance, it is then that it truly exists."

Since then the idea of a future existence was universal, it may be asked, what new doctrine does the New Testament contain? I answer, that of corrupting the theory of the ancient theologists, by annexing to it the heavy and gloomy doctrine of the resurrection of the body.

As to the resurrection of the body, whether the same body or another, it is a miserable conceit, fit only to be preached to man as an animal. It is not worthy to be called doctrine.—Such an idea never entered the brain of any visionary but those of the Christian church ;—yet it is in this that the novelty of the New Testament consists. All the other matters serve but as props to this, and those props are most wretchedly put together.

MIRACLES.

The Christian church is full of miracles. In one of the churches of Brabant, they show a number of cannon balls, which, they say,

the virgin Mary in some former war, caught in her muslin *apron* as they came roaring out of the cannon's mouth, to prevent their hurting the *saints* of her favourite army. She does no such feats now-a-days. Perhaps the reason is, that the infidels have taken away her muslin apron. They show also, between Montmatre and the village of St. Dennis, several places where they say St. Dennis stopt with his head in his hands after it had been cut off at Montmatre. The Protestants will call those things lies; and where is the proof that all the other things called miracles are not as great lies as those.

[There appears to be an omission here in the copy.]

Christ, say those Cabalists, came in the *fulness of time*. And pray what is the fulness of time? The words admit of no idea. They are perfectly Cabalistical. Time is a word invented to describe to our conception a greater or less portion of eternity. It may be a minute, a portion of eternity measured by the vibration of a pendulum of a certain length;—it may be a day, a year, a hundred, or a thousand years, or any other quantity. Those portions are only greater or less comparatively.

The word fulness applies not to any of them. The idea of fulness of time cannot be conceived. A woman with child and ready for delivery, as Mary was when Christ was born, may be said to have gone her full time; but it is the woman that is full, not time.

It may also be said figuratively, in certain cases, that the times are full of events; but time itself is incapable of being full of itself. Ye hypocrites! learn to speak intelligible language.

It happened to be a time of peace when they say Christ was born; and what then? There had been many such intervals: and have been many such since. Time was no fuller in any of them than in the other. If he were he would be fuller now than he ever was before. If he was full then he must be bursting now. But peace or war have relation to circumstances, and not to time; and those Cabalists would be at as much loss to make out any meaning to fulness of circumstances, as to fulness of time; and if they could, it would be fatal; for fulness of circumstances would mean, when there are no more circumstances to happen; and fulness of time when there is no more time to follow.

Christ, therefore, like every other person, was neither in the fulness of one nor the other.

But though we cannot conceive the idea of fulness of time, because we cannot have conception of a time when there shall be no time; nor of fulness of circumstances, because we cannot conceive a state of existence to be without circumstances; we can often see, after a thing is past, if any circumstance necessary to give the utmost activity and success to that thing, was wanting at the time that thing took place. If such a circumstance was wanting, we may be certain that the thing which took place, was not a thing of God's ordaining; whose work is always perfect, and his means perfect means. They tell us that Christ was the Son of God; in that case, he would have known every thing; and he came upon earth to make known the will of God to man throughout the whole earth. If this had been true, Christ would have known and would have been furnished with all the possible means of doing it; and would have instructed mankind, or at least his apostles, in the use of such of the means as they could use themselves to facilitate the accomplishment of the mission; consequently he would have instructed them in the art of printing, for the press is the tongue of the world; and without which, his or their preaching was less than a whistle compared to thunder. Since, then, he did not do this, he had not the means necessary to the mission; and consequently had not the mission.

They tell us in the book of Acts, chap. ii, a very stupid story of the Apostles' having the gift of tongues; and *cloven tongues of fire* descended and sat upon each of them. Perhaps it was this story of cloven tongues that gave rise to the notion of slitting Jackdaws tongues to make them talk. Be that however as it may, the gift of tongues, even if it were true, would be but of little use without the art of printing. I can sit in my chamber, as I do while writing this, and by the aid of printing, can send the thoughts I am writing through the greatest part of Europe, to the East Indies, and over all North America, in a few months. Jesus Christ and his apostles could not do this. They had not the means, and the want of means detects the pretended mission.

There are three modes of communication. Speaking, writing and printing. The first is exceedingly limited. A man's voice can be heard but a few yards of distance: and his person can be but in one place.

Writing is much more extensive; but the thing written cannot be multiplied but at great expense, and the multiplication will be slow and incorrect. Were there no other means of circulating what priests call the word of God (the Old and New Testament) than by writing copies, those copies could not be purchased at less than forty pounds sterling each; consequently, but few people could purchase them, while the writers could scarcely obtain a livelihood by it. But the art of printing changes all the cases, and opens a scene as vast as the world. It gives to man a sort of divine attribute. It gives to him mental omnipresence. He can be every where and at the same instant; for wherever he is read he is mentally there.

The case applies not only against the pretended mission of Christ and his apostles, but against every thing that priests call the word of God, and against all those who pretend to deliver it; for had God ever delivered any verbal word, he would have taught the means of communicating it. The one without the other is inconsistent with the wisdom we conceive of the Creator.

The third chapter of Genesis, verse 21, tells us that *God made coats of skins and cloathed* Adam and Eve. It was infinitely more important that man should be taught the art of printing, than that Adam should be taught to make a pair of leather breeches, or his wife a petticoat.

There is another matter, equally striking and important, that connects itself with those observations against this pretended word of God, this manufactured book, called *Revealed Religion.*

We know that whatever is of God's doing is unalterable by man beyond the laws which the Creator has ordained. We cannot make a tree grow with the root in the air and the fruit in the ground; we cannot make iron into gold nor gold into iron; we cannot make rays of light shine forth rays of darkness, nor darkness shine forth light. If there were such a thing, as a word of God, it would possess the same properties which all his other works do. It would resist destructive alteration. But we see that the book which they call the word of God has not this property. That book says, Genesis chap. 1, verse 27, "*So God created man in his own image;*" but the printer can make it say, *So man created God in his own image.* The words are passive to every transposition of them, or can be annihilated and others put in their places. This is not the case with any thing that is of God's doing; and, there-

fore, this book, called the word of God, tried by the same universal rule which every other of God's works within our reach can be tried by, proves itself to be a forgery.

The bishop says, that "*miracles are proper proofs of a divine mission.*" Admitted. But we know that men, and especially priests, can tell lies and call them miracles. It is therefore necessary, that the thing called a miracle be proved to be true, and also to be miraculous; before it can be admitted as proof of the thing called revelation.

The bishop must be a bad logician not to know that one doubtful thing cannot be admitted as proof that another doubtful thing is true. It would be like attempting to prove a liar not to be a liar, by the evidence of another, who is as great a liar as himself.

Though Jesus Christ, by being ignorant of the art of printing, shows he had not the means necessary to a divine mission, and consequently had no such mission; it does not follow that if he had known that art, the divinity of what they call his mission would be proved thereby, any more than it proved the divinity of the man who invented printing. Something, therefore, beyond printing, even if he had known it, was necessary *as a miracle*, to have proved that what he delivered was the word of God; and this was that the book in which that word should be contained, which is now called the Old and New Testament, should possess the miraculous property, distinct from all human books, of resisting alteration. This would be not only a miracle, but an ever existing and universal miracle; whereas, those which they tell us of, even if they had been true, were momentary and local; they would leave no trace behind, after the lapse of a few years, of having ever existed; but this would prove, in all ages and in all places, the book to be divine and not human; as effectually, and as conveniently, as aquafortis proves gold to be gold by not being capable of acting upon it; and detects all other metals and all counterfeit composition, by dissolving them. Since then the only miracle capable of every proof is wanting, and which every thing that is of a divine origin possesses; all the tales of miracles with which the Old and New Testament are filled, are fit only for impostors to preach and fools to believe.

ORIGIN OF FREE-MASONRY.

PREFACE BY THE EDITOR.

This tract is a chapter belonging to the third part of the Age of Reason, as will be seen by the references made in it to preceding articles, as forming a part of the same work. It was culled from the writings of Mr. Paine, after his death, and published in a mutilated state, by Mrs. Bonneville, his executrix. Passages having a reference to the Christian religion she erased, with a view, no doubt, of accommodating the work to the prejudices of bigotry, These, however, have been restored from the original manuscript, excepting a few lines which were rendered illegible.

The masonic society had committed nothing to print until the year 1722, when Doctor Anderson's book of constitutions, &c. was ordered by the Grand Lodge to be printed. Since that time the masons have published many works respecting the fraternity, all of which, through design or want of information, tend to obscure and embarrass the subject; and as the society had adopted the custom of the priests of the ancient Britons, called Druids, to keep their proceedings an entire secret, mankind in general, including the greater portion of the brethren themselves, have remained in utter ignorance in regard to its establishment and original intention. Various speculations therefore continue to be made respecting the origin of the society, and its views at the time of its formation; and Mr. Paine among the rest, with all his sagacity, has suffered himself to be most egregiously deceived by such writings of the masons as had fallen into his hands. These writers, in giving an account of the society, take up the history of architecture as far back as any record of it has survived the wreck of time. Wherever they can trace in history, whether true or fabulous, any account of noble and grand structures, they presumptuously pronounce them to have been raised by their society. The pyramids of Egypt, the tower of Babel, whose existence is doubted, and Solomon's temple, about which there has probably been much lying,

are all claimed by them. For what is this ridiculous parade, but to make the uninitiated, as well as their own members, few of whom know any thing about it, wonder at the astonishing antiquity of the institution? Would not the advice of Pope apply in this case?

> "Go! and pretend your family is young,
> Nor own your fathers have been fools so long."

If the antiquity of a sect or society proved its utility, or that it was founded in correct principles; the religion taught by the ancient Egptians priests, or judaism, ought to be preferred to Christianity.

There is no possible use to be derived from deception upon this subject. The masonic society is undoubtedly very ancient; having commenced, in the city of York, in England, in the early part of the tenth century of the Christian era; and from thence it spread into other parts of Europe. It was formed by men who had some knowledge of rude architecture, such as it was at that day, and working masons; and had no other view than improvement in the art or craft of masonry. Which their writers dignify with the title of *royal craft*, because some of their Kings have *condescended* to become members of the society, for the purpose, no doubt, of flattering their subjects to persevere in improvements in the art of building; which was useful to them, as they always stand in need of palaces, castles, and churches. The society is composed of free men, none others are admitted, hence the term, free masons. At first there were but three degrees, apprentice; fellow-craft, that is, one who had served an apprenticeship, and was entitled to wages as a journeyman; and master-mason. The latter degree entitled its possessor to contract for building on his own account. It was not until the beginning of the eighteenth century, that any one, according to the regulations of the society, could be admitted a member, who did not labour at the trade of masonry, or knew something of architecture; although, perhaps, through favour, some were smuggled in who had very little or no knowledge of that art.*

* The author of this Preface, although he has thrown considerable light upon the subject, has been himself deceived by masonic writers in respect to the origin of the existing society of Freemasons; which is entirely speculative, and was instituted at the time when, he says, persons not being masons by trade were first admitted as members, viz. in the early part of the eighteenth century. Late writers have shown, that the first Lodge ever established upon the exist-

As to the mysteries of the craft, so much talked of, they are of the same nature as those of carpentry, or any other trade; and consist in a knowledge of the art of masonry; which was thought much more of at the time the society was instituted, than at the present day. The trifling rights and ceremonies, which the masons borrowed from the ancient Druids, are mere allegories, and symbolical signs and words, serving as a medium of secrecy, by means of which the members of the society are enabled to recognize each other.

There is no more propriety in prefixing the term free to masonry, than there is to carpentry, smithery, or to any other trade. It is inapplicable to any art or trade; although it may be applied to the professors of it. At the time the free masons' society was first instituted in England there were in that kingdom both free men and slaves in all the mechanical trades then in use. Doctor Henry, in his history of Great Britain, giving an account of the different ranks of people, &c. from 449 to 1066, after stating that slavery had been in some degree meliorated, observes, "But after all these mitigations of the severities of slavery, the yoke of servitude was still very heavy, and the greater part of the labourers, mechanics, and common people, groaned under that yoke at the conclusion of this period."

All the writers upon this subject, who are members of the society, endeavour to conceal the origin and object of it. For what reason it is dificult to imagine, except it be to keep the world in amazement respecting it. Or, perhaps, their pride induces them to contemn the humble, though laudable and useful purposes for which the institution was formed. Enough, however, has appeared in the old records which they have published to establish the view I have taken of it, and which, when I commenced this preface, I intended to have inserted; but finding they would extend to too

ing speculative plan, was formed in London, in 1717; and that a similar society was formed in Scotland, in 1736. These two lodges soon began to quarrel about precedency; each endeavouring to prove its priority by existing records of the humble mechanical societies of labouring masons, which had been established in both kingdoms many centuries before. The Yorkites, in England, it is believed, produced the oldest documents: both societies, however, continued to grant dispensations for forming lodges in foreign countries.

From these two sources all the Freemason societies, upon the present establishment, owe their origin. Nothing of the kind ever existed in Europe, or any other quarter of the world, previously to 1717. Although ostensibly founded upon a society of real working masons, nothing is now taught in it, nor ever has been, of that art, or any other art or science.—Ed.

great a length, I am under the necessity of omitting them. I will, however, make a few extracts from the old charges of the Free and Accepted Masons, collected from their old records, at the command of the Grand Master, by James Anderson, D. D. Approved by the grand Lodge, and ordered to be printed in the first edition of the book of constitutions, on March 25, 1722.

"*Concerning God and religion.* A mason is obliged, by his tenure, to obey the moral law; and if he rightly understands the art, he will never be a stupid atheist, nor an irreligious libertine. But though in ancient times masons were charged in every country to be of the religion of that country or nation, whatever it was, yet it is now thought more expedient only to oblige them to that religion in which all men agree, leaving their particular opinions to themselves; that is, to be good men and true, or men of honor and honesty, by whatever denominations or persuasions they may be distinguished; whereby masonry becomes the centre of union, and the means of conciliating true friendship among persons, that must have remained at a perpetual distance.*

"*Of lodges.* A lodge is a place where masons assemble and work; hence that assembly, or duly organized society of masons, is called a lodge; and every brother ought to belong to one, and to be subject to its *By-Laws* and the general regulations.

"The persons admitted members of a lodge, must be good and true men, free-born, and of mature and discreet age, no bondmen, no women, no immoral or scandalous men, but of good report.

"*Of apprentices.* Candidates may know, that no master should take an apprentice, unless he has sufficient employment for him, and unless he be a perfect youth, having no maim or defect in his body, that may render him incapable of learning the art, of serving his master's lord, and of being made a brother, and then a fellow-craft in due time, even after he has served such a term of

* William Preston, past master of the lodge of antiquity, in his illustrations of masonry, makes the following remarks on the same subject. "The spirit of the fulminating priest will be tamed; and a moral brother, though of a different persuasion, engage his esteem; for mutual toleration in religious opinions is one of the most distinguishing and valuable characteristics of the craft. As all religions teach morality, if a brother be found to act the part of a truly honest man, his private speculative opinions are left to God and himself. Thus through the influence of masonry, which is reconcilable to the best policy, all those disputes which imbitter life, and sour the tempers of men, are avoided."

years, as the custom of the country directs; and that he should be descended of honest parents.

"*Of the management of the craft in working.* All masons shall work honestly on working days, that they may live creditably on holy days; and the time appointed by the law of the land, or confirmed by custom, shall be observed.

"The most expert of the fellow-craftmen shall be chosen, or appointed the master or overseer of the lord's work: who is to be called master by those that work under him. The craftsmen are to avoid all ill language, and to call each other by no disobliging name, but brother or fellow; and to behave themselves courteously within and without the lodge.

"The master, knowing himself to be able of cunning, shall undertake the lord's work as reasonably as possible, and truly dispend his goods as if they were his own; nor give more wages to any brother or apprentice, than he really may deserve.

"Both the master and the masons receiving their wages justly, shall be faithful to the lord, and honestly finish their work, whether task or journey; nor put the work to task that hath been accustomed to journey.

"None shall discover envy at the prosperity of a brother, nor supplant him, or put him out of his work, if he be capable to finish the same; for no man can finish another's work so much to the lord's profit, unless he be thoroughly acquainted with the designs and draughts of him that began it.

"When a fellow-craftsman is chosen warden of the work under the master, he shall be true both to master and fellows, shall carefully oversee the work in the master's absence, to the lord's profit; and his brethren shall obey him.

"All masons employed, shall meekly receive their wages without murmuring or mutiny, and not desert the master till the work is finished.

"A younger brother shall be instructed in working, to prevent spoiling the materials for want of judgment, and for increasing and continuing of *brotherly love*.

"All the tools used in working shall be approved by the Grand Lodge.

"No labourer shall be employed in the proper work of masonry; nor shall Free Masons work with those that are *not Free*, without

an urgent necessity; nor shall they teach labourers and unaccepted masons, as they should teach a brother or fellow.

"*Of behaviour in the Lodge while constituted.* If any complaint be brought, the brother found guilty shall stand to the award and determination of the lodge, who are the proper and competent judges of all such controversies, (unless you carry it by appeal to the Grand Lodge,) and to whom they ought to be referred, unless a lord's work be hindered the mean while, in which case a particular reference may be made; but you must never go to law about what concerneth masonry, without an absolute necessity apparent to the lodge.

"*Behaviour in presence of strangers not masons.* You shall be cautious in your words and carriage, that the most penetrating stranger shall not be able to discover or find out what is not proper to be intimated; and sometimes you shall divert a discourse, and manage it prudently for the honour of the worshipful fraternity.

"*Behaviour at home, and in your neighbourhood.* You are to act as becomes a moral and wise man; particularly, not to let your family, friends, and neighbours know the concerns of the Lodge, &c., but wisely to consult your own honour, and that of the ancient brotherhood. You must also consult your health, by not continuing together too late, or too long from home, after lodge hours are past; and by avoiding of gluttony and drunkenness that your families be not neglected or injured, nor you disabled from working.

"*Behaviour towards a strange brother.* You are cautiously to examine him, in such a method as prudence shall direct you, that you may not be imposed upon by an ignorant false pretender, whom you are to reject with contempt and derision, and beware of giving him any hints of knowledge.

"But if you discover him to be a true and genuine brother, you are to respect him accordingly; and if he is in want, you must relieve him if you can, or else direct him how he may be relieved; you must employ him some days, or else recommend him to be employed. But you are not charged to do beyond your ability, only to prefer a poor brother that is a good man and true, before any other poor people in the same circumstances."

All the old charges have a reference to Free Masons in the capacity of labourers, and as "*good men and true*," and, no doubt,

had a beneficial effect. But the substance has been lost sight of, and the skeleton, or shadow, only retained. The mummery of the Druidical priests, with infinite additions of the same cast, is cherished as the desideratum of knowledge, calculated to complete the sum of human happiness and perfection. The corruptions of the Society seem to have kept pace with those of the Christian religion. It is at this day as different to what it was, as the Christianity now professed is to the religion taught by Jesus Christ. In his time there were no Doctors of Divinity—Right Reverend Fathers in God, nor their Holinesses the Popes. Neither were there in the Society of Free Masons, at its commencement, any Grand Secretaries—Grand Treasurers—Knights of Malta—Captain Generals—Generalissamos—Most Excellent Scribes—Most Excellent High Priests—Most Excellent Kings, &c. &c.* To which might now, perhaps, very appropriately be added, Grand bottle holder and cork drawer.

The admission into the society of kings, princes, noblemen, bishops, and doctors in divinity, as patrons of the institution, has probably been the cause of so great change. These men, it may be presumed, brought much of their consequence with them into the Lodge, and were, no doubt, addressed in a manner suitable to their supposed dignity in other stations. At any rate, by whatever means these high sounding titles may have been introduced, they appear ridiculous when applied to members of an institution founded for such purpose as that of the Masonic Society, and ought to be abandoned.

It is difficult, at this time, for members of the Society, or any body else, to say what benefit is to be derived from the magical arts pretended to be practised in the Lodges. The mystic rites and ceremonies of the Egyptian priests, handed down to the Druids by Pythagoras; the miraculous stories related of the ancient Jews; and the legendary tales of Roman Catholic superstition, fruitful sources of imposition, have been ransacked to find subjects for new degrees to be tacked to the Society of *Free Masons.* I have in my possession a list of forty-three degrees in what is called Free Masonry; one of which is the order of the Holy Ghost.

* This is true, if reference be made *to what it was*, when under the management of the *real masons*, the operatives previously to the year 1717.

If, as here represented, all this mystical nonsense has been obtruded into the Society, it may be asked, why do men of sense attach themselves to it? I answer, many retire from it after taking two or three degrees; some have political or other sinister views which retain them; and, furthermore, most men are fond of distinction in some way. Any man, of common understanding, by being punctual at the meetings, and paying strict attention to the ceremonies, may become a Warden, that is, overseer, or some other grand office, even that of *Most Worshipful Grand Master;* and in the mean time, keep mounting up the ladder, from mystery to mystery, till he arrives at the forty-third degree of perfection: which, however, in my opinion, cannot be of the least possible advantage to him here or hereafter, any further than the consequence it may give him. As to those who serve in the ranks, they probably consider themselves sufficiently honored by being hailed as brothers by those whom they think their superiors, and permitted to parade the streets with ribbands and white aprons, to the amazement of the *profane* vulgar.

Notwithstanding the remarks I have made, I am by no means inimical to the Masonic Society; for I believe it to be a liberal, social institution, in which persons of the most opposite opinions on religious and political subjects associate in the utmost harmony. By these friendly meetings, it is to be presumed, that party spirit, both in politics and religion, loses much of its asperity among the members; and that those, who otherwise might have entertained hostile feelings towards each other, become friends. In this point of view, the Society deserves to be held in the highest estimation; for however laudable zeal may be in a just cause, when carried to excess, so as to excite personal ill-will towards others of contrary opinions, it degenerates into its kindred vice, leading to hatred and persecution. No good reason can be given why men of the same or similar societies should entertain greater partiality for one another, than for others of their fellow-men, any further than their merits when known may deserve; and to this it is generally limited among men of sense: still, in consequence of the obligations by which Masons are bound to each other, and a sort of bigotry in many, this partiality has had its good effects in mitigating the evils of war; and, for men who travel, a diploma from a Lodge has passed as a letter of recommendation in foreign countries.

As a charitable institution, the Masonic Society ought to be held in high consideration. The relief it grants to its members and their families in distress, is very considerable. But, unfortunately, as I am told, its means are very much exhausted by expenses incurred for refreshments at the regular meetings. If each member were required to pay for what he consumes at those meetings, the society, in consequence of its numbers, by its income arising from annual contributions, fees of initiation, &c., would be enabled to do more in charity, perhaps, than any private society in existence.

As to what Mr. Paine has said upon this abstruse subject, I take the liberty of observing, that, in my opinion, notwithstanding the talents he has bestowed upon it, and the interest he has given to it, his remarks, made doubtless in the utmost sincerity, are calculated to perplex and embarrass readers not conversant in these matters, as much as those of any other author, whose design was to involve it in unintelligible mystery.

"In thoughts more elevate, he reasoned high,
But found no end, in wand'ring mazes lost."

ORIGIN OF FREE-MASONRY.

It is always understood that Free-Masons have a secret which they carefully conceal; but from every thing that can be collected from their own accounts of Masonry, their real secret is no other than their origin, which but few of them understand; and those who do, envelope it in mystery.

The Society of Masons are distinguished into three classes or degrees. 1st. The entered apprentice. 2d. The Fellow-Craft. 3d. The Master Mason.

The entered apprentice knows but little more of Masonry, than the use of signs and tokens, and certain steps and words, by which Masons can recognize each other, without being discovered by a person who is not a Mason. The fellow-craft is not much better instructed in Masonry, than the entered apprentice. It is only in the Master Mason's lodge, that whatever knowledge remains of the origin of Masonry is preserved and concealed.

In 1730, Samuel Pritchard, member of a constituted lodge in England, published a treatise entitled *Masonry Dissected;* and made oath before the Lord Mayor of London, that it was a true copy.

"Samuel Pritchard maketh oath that the copy hereunto annexed is a true and genuine copy in every particular."

In his work he has given the catechism, or examination, in question and answer, of the apprentices, the fellow-craft, and the Master Mason. There was no difficulty in doing this, as it is mere form.

In his introduction he says, "the original institution of Masonry consisted in the foundation of the liberal arts and sciences, but

more especially in Geometry, for at the building of the tower of Babel, the art and mystery of Masonry was first introduced, and from thence handed down by Euclid, a worthy and excellent mathematician of the Egyptians; and he communicated it to Hiram, the Master Mason concerned in building Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem.

Besides the absurdity of deriving Masonry from the building of Babel, where, according to the story, the confusion of languages prevented the builders understanding each other, and consequently of communicating any knowledge they had there, is a glaring contradiction in point of chronology in the account he gives.

Solomon's Temple was built and dedicated 1004 years before the Christian era; and Euclid, as may be seen in the tables of chronology, lived 277 years before the same era. It was therefore impossible that Euclid could communicate any thing to Hiram, since Euclid did not live till 700 years after the time of Hiram.

In 1783, Captain George Smith, inspector of the Royal Artillery Academy at Woolwich, in England, and Provincial Grand Master of Masonry for the county of Kent, published a treatise entitled, The Use and Abuse of Free-Masonry.

In his chapter of the antiquity of Masonry, he makes it to be coeval with creation. "When," says he, "the sovereign architect raised on Masonic principles the beauteous globe, and commanded that master science, Geometry, to lay the planetary world, and to regulate by its laws the whole stupendous system in just unerring proportion, rolling round the central sun."

"But," continues he, "I am not at liberty publicly to undraw the curtain, and thereby to descant on this head; it is sacred, and will ever remain so; those who are honoured with the trust will not reveal it, and those who are ignorant of it cannot betray it." By this last part of the phrase, Smith means the two inferior classes, the fellow-craft and the entered apprentice, for he says, in the next page of his work, "It is not every one that is barely initiated into Free-Masonry that is entrusted with all the mysteries thereto belonging; they are not attainable as things of course, nor by every capacity."

The learned, but unfortunate Doctor Dodd, Grand Chaplain of Masonry, in his oration at the dedication of Free-Mason's-Hall, London, traces Masonry through a variety of stages. Masons,

says he, are well informed from their own private and interior records, that the building of Solomon's Temple is an important era, from whence they derive many mysteries of their art. "Now (says he,) be it remembered that this great event took place above 1000 years before the Christian era, and consequently more than a century before Homer, the first of the Grecian Poets, wrote; and above five centuries before Pythagoras brought from the east his subli ne system of truly masonic instruction to illuminate our western world.

"But, remote as this period is, we date not from thence the commencement of our art. For though it might owe to the wise and glorious King of Israel, some of its many mystic forms and hieroglyphic ceremonies, yet certainly the art itself is coeval with man, the great subject of it.

"We trace," continues he, "its footsteps in the most distant, the most remote ages and nations of the world. We find it amongst the first and most celebrated civilizers of the East. We deduce it regularly from the first astronomers on the plains of Chaldea, to the wise and mystic kings and priests of Egypt, the sages of Greece, and the philosophers of Rome."

From these reports and declarations of Masons of the highest order in the institution, we see that Masonry, without publicly declaring so, lays claim to some divine communication from the Creator, in a manner different from, and unconnected with, the book which the Christians call the Bible; and the natural result from this is, that Masonry is derived from some very ancient religion, wholly independent of, and unconnected with that book.

To come then at once to the point, Masonry (as I shall show from the customs, ceremonies, hieroglyphics, and chronology of Masonry) is derived, and is the remains of the religion of the ancient Druids; who, like the magi of Persia and the priests of Heliopolis in Egypt, were priests of the sun. They paid worship to this great luminary, as the great visible agent of a great invisible first cause, whom they stiled, Time without limits.

The Christian religion and Masonry have one and the same common origin, both are derived from the worship of the sun; the difference between their origin is, that the Christian religion is a parody on the worship of the sun, in which they put a man whom they call Christ. in the place of the sun, and pay him the same

adoration which was originally paid to the sun, as I have shown in the chapter on the origin of the Christian religion.*

In Masonry many of the ceremonies of the Druids are preserved in their original state, at least without any parody. With them the sun is still the sun ; and his image in the form of the sun, is the great emblematical ornament of Masonic Lodges and Masonic dresses. It is the central figure on their aprons, and they wear it also pendant on the breast in their lodges, and in their processions. It has the figure of a man, as at the head of the sun, as Christ is always represented.

At what period of antiquity, or in what nation, this religion was first established, is lost in the labyrinth of unrecorded times. It is generally ascribed to the ancient Egyptians, the Babylonians and Chaldeans, and reduced afterwards to a system regulated by the apparent progress of the sun through the twelve signs of zodiac by Zoroaster the lawgiver of Persia, from whence Pythagoras brought it into Greece. It is to these matters Dr. Dodd refers in the passage already quoted from his oration.

The worship of the sun, as the great visible agent of a great invisible first cause, time without limits, spread itself over a considerable part of Asia and Africa, from thence to Greece and Rome, through all ancient Gaul, and into Britain and Ireland.

Smith, in his chapter on the antiquity of Masonry in Britain, says, that "notwithstanding the obscurity which envelopes masonic history in that country, various circumstances contribute to prove that Free-Masonry was introduced into Britain about 1030 years before Christ."

It cannot be Masonry in its present state that Smith here alludes to. The Druids flourished in Britain at the period he speaks of, and it is from them that Masonry is descended. Smith has put the child in the place of the parent.

It sometimes happens, as well in writing as in conversation, that a person lets slip an expression that serves to unravel what he intends to conceal, and this is the case with Smith, for in the same chapter he says, "The Druids, when they committed any thing to writing, used the Greek alphabet, and I am bold to assert that the most perfect remains of the Druid's rites and ceremonies are

* Referring to an unpublished portion of the work of which this chapter forms a part.

preserved in the customs and ceremonies of the Masons that are to be found existing among mankind. "My brethren" says he, "may be able to trace them with greater exactness than I am at liberty to explain to the public."

This is a confession from a Master Mason, without intending it to be so understood by the public, that Masonry is the remains of the religion of the Druids; the reasons for the Masons keeping this a secret I shall explain in the course of this work.

As the study and contemplation of the Creator in the works of the creation, of which the sun, as the great visible agent of that Being, was the visible object of the adoration of Druids, all their religious rites and ceremonies had reference to the apparent progress of the sun through the twelve signs of the Zodiac, and his influence upon the earth. The Masons adopt the same practices. The roof of their temples or lodges is ornamented with a sun, and the floor is a representation of the variegated face of the earth, either by carpeting or by Mosaic work.

Free-Masons' Hall, in Great Queen-street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, is a magnificent building, and cost upwards of 12,000 pounds sterling. Smith, in speaking of this building, says (page 152.) "The roof of this magnificent hall is, in all probability the highest piece of finished architecture in Europe. In the centre of this roof, a most resplendent sun is represented in burnished gold, surrounded with the twelve signs of the Zodiac, with thei respective characters:

♈ Aries	♎ Libra
♉ Taurus	♏ Scorpio
♊ Gemini	♐ Sagittarius
♋ Cancer	♑ Capricornus
♌ Leo	♒ Aquarius
♍ Virgo	♓ Pisces

After giving this description, he says, "The emblematical meaning of the sun is well known to the enlightened and inquisitive Free-Mason; and as the real sun is situated in the centre of the universe, so the emblematical sun is the centre of real Masonry. We all know continues he, that the sun is the fountain of light, the source of the seasons, the cause of the vicissitudes of day and night, the parent of vegetation, the friend of man; hence the scientific Free-Mason only knows the reason why the sun is placed in the centre of this beautiful hall."

The Masons, in order to protect themselves from the persecution of the Christian church, have always spoken in a mystical manner of the figure of the sun in their lodges, or, like the astronomer Lalande, who is a mason, een silent upon the subject. It is their secret, especially in Catholic countries, because the figure of the sun is the expressive criterion that denotes they are descended from the Druids, and that wise, elegant, philosophical, religion, was the faith opposite to the faith of the gloomy Christian church.

The lodges of the Masons, if built for the purpose, are constructed in a manner to correspond with the apparent motion of the sun. They are situated East and West. The master's place is always in the East. In the examination of an entered apprentice, the master, among many other questions, asks him,

Q. How is the lodge situated?

A. East and West.

Q. Why so?

A. Because all churches and chapels are, or ought to be so.

This answer, which is mere catechismal form, is not an answer to the question. It does no more than remove the question a point further, which is, why ought all churches and chapels to be so? But as the entered apprentice is not initiated into the Druidical mysteries of Masonry, he is not asked any questions to which a direct answer would lead thereto.

Q. Where stands your master?

A. In the East.

Q. Why so?

A. As the sun rises in the East, and opens the day, so the master stands in the East, (with his right hand upon his left breast, being a sign, and the square about his neck,) to open the lodge, and set his men at work.

Q. Where stand your wardens?

A. In the West.

Q. What is their business?

A. As the sun sets in the West to close the day, so the wardens stand in the West, (with their right hands upon their left breasts being a sign, and the level and plumb rule about their necks,) to close the lodge, and dismiss the men from labour, paying them their wages.

Here the name of the sun is mentioned, but it is proper to observe, that in this place it has reference only to labour or to the

time of labour, and not to any religious Druidical rite or ceremony, as it would have with respect to the situation of lodges East and West. I have already observed in the chapter on the origin of the Christian religion, that the situation of churches East and West is taken from the worship of the sun, which rises in the east, and has not the least reference to the person called Jesus Christ. The Christians never bury their dead on the North side of a church;* and a Mason's Lodge always has, or is supposed to have, three windows which are called fixed lights, to distinguish them from the moveable lights of the sun and the moon. The master asks the entered apprentice,

Q. How are they (the fixed lights) situated?

A. East, West, and South.

Q. What are their uses?

A. To light the men to and from their work.

Q. Why are there no lights in the North?

A. Because the sun darts no rays from thence.

This, among numerous other instances, shows that the Christian religion, and Masonry, have one and the same common origin, the ancient worship of the sun.

The high festival of the Masons is on the day they call St. John's day; but every enlightened Mason must know that holding their festival on this day has no reference to the person called St. John; and that it is only to disguise the true cause of holding it on this

* This may have been the case formerly, but I believe, at present, very little attention is paid to the position of burying grounds in respect to churches. In regard to "the situation of Churches east and west," I find the rule was observed as late as the time of building Saint Paul's Cathedral, which was finished in 1697. William Presten, in giving a description of this edifice, in his Illustrations of Masonry, says, "A strict regard to the situation of this Cathedral, due east and west, has given it an oblique appearance with respect to Ludgate-street in front; so that the great front gate in the surrounding iron rails, being made to regard the street in front, rather than the church to which it belongs, the statue of queen Ann, that is exactly in the middle of the west front, is thrown on one side the straight approach from the gate to the church, and gives an idea of the whole edifice being awry." In 1707, Sir Christopher Wren, the Architect of St. Paul's Cathedral, in a letter addressed to a joint commissioner with himself for building fifty churches in addition to others already built, to supply the place of those destroyed by the conflagration of 1666, observes, "I could wish that all the burials in churches should be disallowed, which is not only unwholesome, but the pavements can never be kept even, nor pews upright; and if the Church-yard is close about the church, this also is inconvenient. It will be enquired, where then shall be the burials? I answer in cemeteries seated in the out-skirts of the town. As to the situation of the churches, I should propose they be brought as forward as possible into the larger and more open streets. Nor are we, I think, too nicely to observe East and West in the position, unless it falls out properly." See Anderson's Book of Constitutions of the Free-Masons.—EDITOR.

day, that they call the day by that name. As there were Masons, or at least Druids, many centuries before the time of St. John, if such person ever existed, the holding their festival on this day must refer to some cause totally unconnected with John.

The case is, that the day called St. John's day, is the 24th of June, and is what is called Midsummer-day. The sun is then arrived at the summer solstice; and, with respect to his meridional altitude, or height at high noon, appears for some days to be of the same height. The astronomical longest day, like the shortest day, is not every year, on account of leap year, on the same numerical day, and therefore the 24th of June is always taken for Midsummer-day; and it is in honor of the sun, which has then arrived at his greatest height, in our hemisphere, and not any thing with respect to St. John, that this annual festival of the Masons, taken from the Druids, is celebrated on Midsummer-day.

Customs will often outlive the remembrance of their origin, and this is the case with respect to a custom still practised in Ireland, where the Druids flourished at the time they flourished in Britain. On the eve of Saint John's day, that is, on the eve of Midsummer day, the Irish light fires on the tops of the hills. This can have no reference to St. John; but it has emblematical reference to the sun, which on that day is at his highest summer elevation, and might in common language be said to have arrived at the top of the hill.

As to what Masons, and books of Masonry, tell us of Solomon's Temple at Jerusalem, it is no wise improbable that some masonic ceremonies may have been derived from the building of that temple, for the worship of the sun was in practice many centuries before the temple existed, or before the Israelites came out of Egypt. And we learn from the history of the Jewish Kings, 2 Kings, chap. xxii. xxiii. that the worship of the sun was performed by the Jews in that temple. It is, however, much to be doubted, if it was done with the same scientific purity and religious morality, with which it was performed by the Druids, who, by all accounts that historically remain of them, were a wise, learned, and moral class of men. The Jews, on the contrary, were ignorant of astronomy, and of science in general, and if a religion founded upon astronomy, fell into their hands, it is almost certain it would be corrupted. We do not read in the history of the Jews, whether in the Bible or elsewhere, that they were the inventors or the improvers of any

one art or science. Even in the building of this temple, the Jews did not know how to square and frame the timber for beginning and carrying on the work, and Solomon was obliged to send to Hiram, King of Tyre, (Zidon) to procure workmen; "for thou knowest, (says Solomon to Hiram, 1 Kings, chap. v. ver. 6.) that there is not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Zidonians." This temple was more properly Hiram's temple than Solomon's, and if the Masons derive any thing from the building of it, they owe it to the Zidonians and not to the Jews.—But to return to the worship of the sun in this temple.

It is said, 2 Kings, chap. xxiii. ver. 8. "And king Josiah put down all the idolatrous priests that burned incense unto the sun, the moon, the planets, and all the host of heaven."—And it is said at the 11th ver. "and he took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the Lord, and burned the chariots of the sun with fire, ver. 13, and the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Astoreth, the abomination of the Zidonians (the very people that built the temple) did the king defile.

Besides these things, the description that Josephus gives of the decorations of this temple, resembles on a large scale those of a Mason's Lodge. He says that the distribution of the several parts of the temple of the Jews represented all nature, particularly the parts most apparent of it, as the sun, the moon, the planets, the zodiac, the earth, the elements; and that the system of the world was retraced there by numerous ingenious emblems. These, in all probability, are, what Josiah, in his ignorance, calls the abominations of the Zidonians.* Every thing, however, drawn from this temple,† and applied to Masonry, still refers to the worship of the

* Smith, in speaking of a Lodge, says, when the Lodge is revealed to an entering Mason, it discovers to him *a representation of the world*; in which, from the wonders of nature, we are led to contemplate her great Original, and worship him from his mighty works; and we are thereby also moved to exercise those moral and social virtues which become mankind as the servants of the great Architect of the world.

† It may not be improper here to observe, that the law called the law of Moses could not have been in existence at the time of building this temple. Here is the likeness of things in heaven above and in the earth beneath. And we read in 1 Kings, chap. 6, 7, that Solomon made cherubs and cherubims, that he carved all the walls of the house round about with cherubims and palm-trees, and open flowers, and that he made a molten sea, placed on twelve oxen, and the ledges of it were ornamented with lions, oxen, and cherubims; all this is contrary to the law, called the law of Moses.

sun, however corrupted or misunderstood by the Jews, and, consequently, to the religion of the Druids.

Another circumstance, which shows that Masonry is derived from some ancient system, prior to, and unconnected with, the Christian religion, is the chronology, or method of counting time, used by the Masons in the records of their lodges. They make no use of what is called the Christian era; and they reckon their months numerically, as the ancient Egyptians did, and as the Quakers do now. I have by me, a record of a French lodge, at the time the late Duke of Orleans, then Duke de Chartres, was Grand Master of Masonry in France. It begins as follows: "*Le trentieme jour due sixieme mois de l'an de la V. L. cinq. mil sept cent soixante trois ;*" that is, the thirteenth day of the sixth month of the year of the venerable Lodge, five thousand seven hundred and seventy-three. By what I observe in English books of Masonry, the English Masons use the initials A. L. and not V. L. By A. L. they mean in the year of the Lodge,* as the Christians by A. D. mean in the year of our Lord. But A. L. like V. L. refers to the same chronological era, that is, to the supposed time of the creation. In the chapter on the origin of the Christian religion, I have shown that the cosmogany, that is, the account of the creation, with which the book of Genesis opens, has been taken and mutilated from the Zend-Avista of Zoroaster, and is fixed as a preface to the Bible, after the Jews returned from captivity in Babylon, and that the rabbins of the Jews do not hold their account in Genesis to be a fact, but mere allegory. The six thousand years in the Zend-Avista, is changed or interpolated into six days in the account of Genesis. The Masons appear to have chosen the same period, and perhaps to avoid the suspicion and persecution of the church, have adopted the era of the world, as the era of Masonry. The V. L. of the French, and A. L. of the English Mason, answer to the A. M. Anno Mundi, or year of the world.

Though the Masons have taken many of their ceremonies and hieroglyphics from the ancient Egyptians, it is certain they have not taken their chronology from thence. If they had, the church would soon have sent them to the stake; as the chronology of

* V. L. used by French Masons, are the initials of Vraie Lumiere, true light; and A. L. used by the English, are the initials of Anno Lucis, in the year of light. But, as in both cases, as Mr. Paine observes, reference is had to the supposed time of the creation, his mistake is of no consequence.—EDITOR.

the Egyptians, like that of the Chinese, goes many thousand years beyond the Bible chronology.

The religion of the Druids, as before said, was the same as the religion of the ancient Egyptians. The priests of Egypt were the professors and teachers of science, and were styled priests of Heliopolis, that is, of the *city of the sun*. The Druids in Europe, who were the same order of men, have their name from the Teutonic or ancient German language; the Germans being anciently called Teutones. The word Druid signifies a *wise man*. In Persia they were called magi, which signifies the same thing.

"Egypt," says Smith, "from whence we derive many of our mysteries, has always borne a distinguished rank in history, and was once celebrated above all others for its antiquities, learning, opulence and fertility. In their system, their principal hero-gods, Osiris and Isis, theologically represented the Supreme Being and universal nature; and physically the two great celestial luminaries, the sun and the moon, by whose influence all nature was actuated. The experienced brethren of the society, (says Smith in a note to this passage) are well informed what affinity these symbols bear to Masonry, and why they are used in all Masonic Lodges."

In speaking of the apparel of the Masons in their Lodges, part of which, as we see in their public processions, is a white leather apron, he says, "the Druids were apparelled in white at the time of their sacrifices and solemn offices. The Egyptian priests of Osiris wore snow-white cotton. The Grecian and most other priests wore white garments. As Masons, we regard the principles of those *who were the first worshipers of the true God*, imitate their apparel, and assume the badge of innocence.

"The Egyptians," continues Smith, "in the earliest ages constituted a great number of Lodges, but with assiduous care kept their secrets of Masonry from all strangers. These secrets have been imperfectly handed down to us by tradition only, and ought to be kept undiscovered to the labourers, craftsmen, and apprentices, till by good behaviour and long study, they become better acquainted in geometry and the liberal arts, and thereby qualified for Masters and Wardens, which is seldom or ever the case with English Masons."

Under the head of Free-Masonry, written by the astronomer Lalande, in the French Encyclopedia, I expected from his great

knowledge in astronomy, to have found much information on the origin of Masonry; for what connection can there be between any institution and the sun and twelve signs of the zodiac, if there be not something in that institution, or in its origin, that has reference to astronomy. Every thing used as an hieroglyphic, has reference to the subject and purpose for which it is used; and we are not to suppose the Free-Masons, among whom are many very learned and scientific men, to be such idiots as to make use of astronomical signs without some astronomical purpose.

But I was much disappointed in my expectation from Lalande. In speaking of the origin of Masonry, he says, "*L' origine de la maconnerie se perd, comme tant d'autres dans l'obscurite des temps;*" that is, the origin of Masonry, like many others, loses itself in the obscurity of time. When I came to this expression, I supposed Lalande a Mason, and on enquiry found he was. This *passing over* saved him from the embarrassment which Masons are under respecting the disclosure of their origin, and which they are sworn to conceal. There is a society of Masons in Dublin who take the name of Druids; these Masons must be supposed to have a reason for taking that name.

I come now to speak of the cause of secrecy used by the Masons.

The natural source of secrecy is fear. When any new religion over-runs a former religion, the professors of the new become the persecutors of the old. We see this in all the instances that history brings before us. When Hilkiah the priest, and Shaphan the scribe, in the reign of King Josiah, found, or pretended to find the law, called the law of Moses, a thousand years after the time of Moses, and it does not appear from the 2d book of Kings, chapters 22, 23, that such law was ever practiced or known before the time of Josiah, he established that law as a national religion, and put all the priests of the sun to death. When the Christian religion over-ran the Jewish religion, the Jews were the continual subjects of persecution in all Christian countries. When the Protestant religion in England over-ran the Roman Catholic religion, it was made death for a Catholic priest to be found in England. As this has been the case in all the instances we have any knowledge of, we are obliged to admit it with respect to the case in question, and that when the Christian religion over-ran the religion of the Druids in Italy, ancient Gaul, Britain, and Ireland, the

Druids became the subjects of persecution. This would naturally and necessarily oblige such of them as remained attached to their original religion to meet in secret. and under the strongest injunctions of secrecy. Their safety depended upon it. A false brother might expose the lives of many of them to destruction; and from the remains of the religion of the Druids, thus preserved, arose the institution, which, to avoid the name of Druid, took that of Mason, and practised, under this new name, the rights and ceremonies of Druids.

LETTER

TO

SAMUEL ADAMS.

My dear and venerable friend,

I received with great pleasure your friendly and affectionate letter of Nov. 30th, and I thank you also for the frankness of it. Between men in pursuit of truth, and whose object is the happiness of man both here and hereafter, there ought to be no reserve. Even error has a claim to indulgence, if not to respect, when it is believed to be truth. I am obliged to you for your affectionate remembrance of what you style my services in awakening the public mind to a declaration of independence, and supporting it after it was declared. I also, like you, have often looked back on those times, and have thought, that if independence had not been declared at the time it was, the public mind could not have been brought up to it afterwards. It will immediately occur to you, who were so intimately acquainted with the situation of things at that time, that I allude to the black times of *seventy-six;* for though I know, and you my friend also know, they were no other than the natural consequences of the military blunders of that campaign, the country might have viewed them as proceeding from a natural inability to support its cause against the enemy, and have sunk under the despondency of that misconceived idea. This was the impression against which it was necessary the country should be strongly animated.

I now come to the second part of your letter, on which I shall be as frank with you as you are with me. "But (say you) when I *heard* you had turned your mind to a defence of *infidelity*, I felt myself much astonished," &c. What, my good friend, do you call believing in God *infidelity?* for that is the great point mentioned in the Age of Reason against all divided beliefs and *allegorical* divinities. The Bishop of Llandaff (Dr. Watson) not only acknowledges this, but pays me some compliments upon it, in his answer to the second part of that work. "There is (says he) a philosophical sublimity in some of your ideas, when speaking of the Creator of the Universe."

What then, (my much esteemed friend, for I do not respect you the less because we differ, and that perhaps not much, in religious sentiments,) what, I ask, is the thing called *infidelity?* If we go back to your ancestors and mine, three or four hundred years ago, for we must have fathers, and grandfathers or we should not have been here, we shall find them praying to saints and virgins, and believing in purgatory and transubstantiation; and therefore, all of us are infidels according to our forefather's belief. If we go back to times more ancient we shall again be infidels according to the belief of some other forefathers.

The case, my friend, is, that the world has been overrun with fable and creed of human invention, with sectaries of whole nations against other nations, and sectaries of those sectaries in each of them against each other. Every sectary, except the Quakers, have been persecutors. Those who fled from persecution, persecuted in their turn, and it is this confusion of creeds that has filled the world with persecution, and deluged it with blood. Even the depredation on your commerce by the Barbary powers, sprang from the crusades of the church against those powers. It was a war of creed against creed, each boasting of God for its author, and reviling each other with the name of infidel. If I do not believe as you believe, it proves that you do not believe as I believe, and this is all that it proves.

There is, however, one point of union wherein all religions meet, and that is in the first article of every man's creed, and of every nation's creed, that has any creed at all, *I believe in God.* Those who rest here, and there are millions who do, cannot be wrong as far as their creed goes. Those who choose to go further *may be wrong*, for it is impossible that all can be right,

since there is so much contradiction among them. The first, therefore, are, in my opinion, on the safest side.

I presume you are so far acquainted with ecclesiastical history as to know, and the bishop who has answered me has been obliged to acknowledge the fact, that the Books that compose the New Testament, were voted by *yeas* and *nays* to be the Word of God, as you now vote a law, by the Popish Councils of Nice and Laodocia, about fourteen hundred and fifty years ago. With respect to the fact there is no dispute, neither do I mention it for the sake of controversy. This vote may appear authority enough to some, and not authority enough to others. It is proper, however, that every body should know the fact.

With respect to the Age of Reason, which you so much condemn, and that, I believe, without having read it, for you say only that you *heard* of it, I will inform you of a circumstance, because you cannot know it by other means.

I have said in the first page of the first part of that work, that it had long been my intention to publish my thoughts upon religion, but that I had reserved it to a later time of life. I have now to inform you why I wrote it, and published it at the time I did.

In the first place, I saw my life in continual danger. My friends were falling as fast as the guillotine could cut their heads off, and as I expected every day the same fate, I resolved to begin my work. I appeared to myself to be on my death bed, for death was on every side of me, and I had no time to lose. This accounts for my writing at the time I did, and so nicely did the time and intention meet, that I had not finished the first part of the work more than six hours before I was arrested and taken to prison. Joel Barlow was with me, and knows the fact.

In the second place, the people of France were running headlong into atheism, and I had the work translated and published in their own language, to stop them in that career, and fix them to the first article (as I have before said) of every man's creed, who has any creed at all, *I believe in God.* I endangered my own life, in the first place, by opposing in the Convention the executing of the king, and labouring to show they were trying the monarch and not the man, and that the crimes imputed to him were the crimes of the monarchial system; and endangered it a second time by opposing atheism, and yet *some* of your priests, for I do not be-

lieve that all are perverse, cry out, in the *war-whoop* of monarchial priest-craft, what an infidel! what a wicked man is Thomas Paine! They might as well add, for he believes in God, and is against shedding blood.

But all this *war-whoop* of the pulpit has some concealed object. Religion is not the cause, but is the stalking horse. They put it forward to conceal themselves behind it. It is not a secret that there has been a party composed of the leaders of the Federalists, for I do not include all Federalists with their leaders, who have been working by various means for several years past, to overturn the Federal Constitution established on the representative system, and place government in the new world on the corrupt system of the old. To accomplish this a large standing army was necessary, and as a pretence for such an army, the danger of a foreign invasion must be bellowed forth, from the pulpit, from the press, and by their public orators.

I am not of a disposition inclined to suspicion. It is in its nature a mean and cowardly passion, and upon the whole, even admitting error into the case, it is better, I am sure it is more generous to be wrong on the side of confidence, than on the side of suspicion. But I know as a fact, that the English Government distributes annually fifteen hundred pounds sterling among the Presbyterian ministers in England, and one hundred among those of Ireland;* and when I hear of the strange discourses of some of your ministers and professors of colleges I cannot, as the Quakers say, find freedom in my mind to acquit them. Their anti-revolutionary doctrines invite suspicion, even against one's will, and in spite of one's charity to believe well of them.

As you have given me one Scripture phrase, I will give you another for those ministers. It is said in Exodus chapter xxiii, verse 28, "Thou shalt not revile the Gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people." But those ministers, such I mean as Dr. Emmons, curse ruler and people both, for the majority are, politically, the people, and it is those who have chosen the ruler whom they curse.

As to the first part of the verse that of *not reviling the Gods*, it makes no part of my Scripture: I have but one God.

* There must undoubtedly be a very gross mistake in respect to the amount said to be expended; the sums intended to be expressed were probably fifteen hundred thousand, and one hundred thousand pounds.—Editor.

Since I began this letter, for I write it by piecemeals as I have leisure, I have seen the four letters that passed between you and John Adams. In your first letter you say. "Let divines and philosophers, statesmen and patriots, unite their endeavours to *renovate the age*, by inculcating in the minds of youth *the fear and love of the Deity and universal philanthropy*." Why, my dear friend, this is exactly *my* religion, and is the whole of it. That you may have an idea that the Age of Reason (for I believe you have not read it) inculcates this reverential fear and love of the Deity, I will give you a paragraph from it.

"Do we want to contemplate his power? We see it in the immensity of the Creation. Do we want to contemplate his wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible whole is governed. Do we want to contemplate his munificence? We see it in the abundance with which he fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate his mercy? We see it in his not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful."

As I am fully with you in your first part, that respecting the Deity, so am I in your second, that of *universal philanthropy;* by which I do not mean merely the sentimental benevolence of wishing well, but the practical benevolence of doing good. We cannot serve the Deity in the manner we serve those who cannot do without that service. He needs no services from us. We can add nothing to eternity. But it is in our power to render a service *acceptable* to him, and that is, not by praying, but by endeavouring to make his creatures happy. A man does not serve God when he prays, for it is himself he is trying to serve; and as to hiring or paying men to pray, as if the Deity needed instruction, it is in my opinion an abomination. One good school-master is of more use and of more value than a load of such parsons as Dr. Emmons, and some others.

You, my dear and much respected friend, are now far in the vale of years; I have yet, I believe, some years in store, for I have a good state of health and a happy mind: I take care of both, by nourishing the first with temperance, and the latter with abundance.

This I believe you will allow to be the true philosophy of life. You will see by my third letter to the citizens of the United States, that I have been exposed to, and preserved through many dangers; but, instead of buffeting the Deity with prayers, as if I dis-

trusted him, or must dictate to him, I reposed myself on his protection: and you, my friend, will find, even in your last moments, more consolation in the silence of resignation than in the murmuring wish of prayer.

In every thing which you say in your second letter to John Adams, respecting our rights as men and citizens in this world, I am perfectly with you. On other points we have to answer to our Creator and not to each other. The key of heaven is not in the keeping of any sect, nor ought the road to it to be obstructed by any. Our relation to each other in this world is, as men, and the man who is a friend to man and to his rights, let his religious opinions be what they may, is a good citizen, to whom I can give, as I ought to do, and as every other ought, the right hand of fellowship, and to none with more hearty good will, my dear friend, than to you.

THOMAS PAINE.

Federal City, Jan. 1, 1803.

EXTRACT FROM A

LETTER TO ANDREW A. DEAN.*

Respected Friend,

I received your friendly letter, for which I am obliged to you. It is three weeks ago to day (Sunday, Aug. 15,) that I was struck with a fit of an apoplexy, that deprived me of all sense and motion. I had neither pulse nor breathing, and the people about me supposed me dead. I had felt exceedingly well that day, and had just taken a slice of bread and butter, for supper, and was going to bed. The fit took me on the stairs, as suddenly as if I had been shot through the head; and I got so very much hurt by the fall, that I have not been able to get in and out of bed since that day, otherwise than being lifted out in a blanket, by two persons; yet all this while my mental faculties have remained as perfect as I ever enjoyed them. I consider the scene I have passed through as an experiment on dying, and I find that death has no terrors for me. As to the people called Christians, they have no evidence that their religion is true.† There is no more proof that the Bible is the word of God, than that the Koran of Mahomet is the word of God. It is education makes all the difference. Man, before he begins to think for himself, is as much the child of habit in *Creeds* as he is in ploughing and sowing. Yet creeds, like opinions, prove nothing.

* Mr. Dean rented Mr. Paine's farm at New Rochelle.

† Mr. Paine's entering upon the subject of religion on this occasion, it may be presumed was occasioned by the following passage in Mr. Dean's letter to him, viz:

"I have read with good attention your manuscript on dreams, and examination on the prophecies in the Bible. I am now searching the old prophecies, and comparing the same to those said to be quoted in the New Testament. I confess the comparison is a matter worthy of our serious attention; I know not the result till I finish; then, if you be living, I shall communicate the same to you; I hope to be with you soon."

Where is the evidence that the person called Jesus Christ is the begotten Son of God? The case admits not of evidence either to our senses or our mental faculties: neither has God given to man any talent by which such a thing is comprehensible. It cannot therefore be an object for faith to act upon, for faith is nothing more than an assent the mind gives to something it sees cause to believe is fact. But priests, preachers, and fanatics, put imagination in the place of faith, and it is the nature of the imagination to believe without evidence.

If Joseph the carpenter dreamed, (as the book of Matthew, chap. 1st, says he did,) that his betrothed wife, Mary, was with child, by the Holy Ghost, and that an angel told him so; I am not obliged to put faith in his dream, nor do I put any, for I put no faith in my own dreams, and I should be weak and foolish indeed to put faith in the dreams of others.

The Christian religion is derogatory to the Creator in all its articles. It puts the Creator in an inferior point of view, and places the Christian Devil above him. It is he, according to the absurd story in Genesis, that outwits the Creator, in the garden of Eden, and steals from him his favorite creature, man, and, at last, obliges him to beget a son, and put that son to death, to get man back again, and this the priests of the Christian religion, call redemption.

Christian authors exclaim against the practice of offering up human sacrifices, which, they say, is done in some countries; and those authors make those exclamations without ever reflecting that their own doctrine of salvation is founded on a human sacrifice. They are saved, they say, by the blood of Christ. The Christian religion begins with a dream and ends with a murder.

As I am now well enough to sit up some hours in the day, though not well enough to get up without help, I employ myself as I have always done, in endeavouring to bring man to the right use of the reason that God has given him, and to direct his mind immediately to his Creator, and not to fanciful secondary beings called mediators, as if God was superannuated or ferocious.

As to the book called the Bible, it is blasphemy to call it the word of God. It is a book of lies and contradiction, and a history of bad times and bad men. There is but a few good characters in the whole book. The fable of Christ and his twelve apostles, which is a parody on the sun and the twelve signs of the Zodiac,

copied from the ancient religions of the eastern world, is the least hurtful part. Every thing told of Christ has reference to the sun. His reported resurrection is at sunrise, and that on the first day of the week; that is, on the day anciently dedicated to the sun, and from thence called Sunday; in latin *Dies Solis*, the day of the sun; as the next day, Monday, is Moon-day. But there is no room in a letter to explain these things.

While man keeps to the belief of one God, his reason unites with his creed. He is not shocked with contradictions and horrid stories. His bible is the heavens and the earth. He beholds his Creator in all his works, and every thing he beholds inspires him with reverence and gratitude. From the goodness of God to all, he learns his duty to his fellow-man, and stands self-reproved when he transgresses it. Such a man is no persecutor.

But when he multiplies his creed with imaginary things, of which he can have neither evidence nor conception, such as the tale of the garden of Eden, the talking serpent, the fall of man, the dreams of Joseph the carpenter, the pretended resurrection and ascension, of which there is even no historical relation, for no historian of those times mentions such a thing, he gets into the pathless region of confusion, and turns either frantic or hypocrite. He forces his mind, and pretends to believe what he does not believe. This is in general the case with the methodists. Their religion is all creed and no morals.

I have now my friend given you a *fac simile* of my mind on the subject of religion and creeds, and my wish is, that you make this letter as publicly known as you find opportunities of doing.

Yours, in friendship,

THOMAS PAINE.

N. Y. Aug. 1806.

MISCELLANEOUS PIECES.

EXTRACTED FROM THE "PROSPECT, OR VIEW OF THE MORAL WORLD," A PERIODICAL WORK, EDITED AND PUBLISHED BY ELIHU PALMER, AT NEW-YORK, IN THE YEAR 1804.

The following fugitive pieces were written by Mr. Paine occasionally to pass off an idle hour, and communicated for the Prospect, to aid his friend, Mr. Palmer, in support of that publication. Perhaps, in some cases, it may appear that the same ideas have been expressed in his other works; but, if so, the various points of view, in which they are here placed, it is presumed, will not fail to give an interest to these miscellaneous remarks.

The same signatures are continued as were subscribed to the original communications.

REMARKS ON R. HALL'S SERMONS.

[*The following piece, obligingly communicated by Mr. Paine, for the Prospect, is full of that acuteness of mind, perspicuity of expression, and clearness of discernment for which this excellent author is so remarkable in all his writings.*]

Robert Hall, a protestant minister in England, preached and published a sermon against what he calls "*Modern infidelity.*" A copy of it was sent to a gentleman in America, with a request for his opinion thereon. That gentleman sent it to a friend of his in New-York, with the request written on the cover—and this last sent it to Thomas Paine, who wrote the following observations on the blank leaf at the end of the sermon.

The preacher of the foregoing sermon speaks a great deal about *infidelity*, but does not define what he means by it. His harangue is a general exclamation. Every thing, I suppose, that is not in

his creed is infidelity with him, and his creed is infidelity with me. Infidelity is believing falsely. If what christians believe is not true, it is the christians that are the infidels.

The point between deists and christians is not about doctrine, but about fact —for if the things believed by the christians to be facts, are not facts, the doctrine founded thereon falls of itself. There is such a book as the Bible, but is it a fact that the bible is *revealed religion ?* The christians cannot prove it is. They put tradition in place of evidence, and tradition is not proof. If it were, the reality of witches could be proved by the same kind of evidence.

The bible is a history of the times of which it speaks, and history is not revelation. The obscene and vulgar stories in the bible are as repugnant to our ideas of the purity of a divine Being, as the horrid cruelties and murders it ascribes to him, are repugnant to our ideas of his justice. It is the reverence of the *Deists* for the attributes of the DEITY, that causes them to reject the bible.

Is the account which the christian church gives of the person called Jesus Christ, a fact or a fable ? Is it a fact that he was begotten by the Holy Ghost ? The christians cannot prove it, for the case does not admit of proof. The things called miracles in the bible, such, for instance, as raising the dead, admitted, *if true*, of occular demonstration, but the story of the conception of Jesus Christ in the womb is a case beyond miracle, for it did not admit of demonstration. Mary, the reputed mother of Jesus, who must be supposed to know best, never said so herself, and all the evidence of it is, that the book of Matthew says, that Joseph dreamed an angel told him so. Had an old maid of two or three hundred years of age, brought forth a child, it would have been much better presumptive evidence of a supernatural conception, than Matthew's story of Joseph's dream about his young wife.

Is it a fact that Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world, and how is it proved ? If a God he could not die, and as a man he could not redeem, how then is this redemption proved to be fact ? It is said that Adam eat of the forbidden fruit, commonly called an apple, and thereby subjected himself and all his posterity for ever to eternal damnation. This is worse than visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the *third and fourth generations.* But how was the death of Jesus Christ to affect or alter the case ?— Did God thirst for blood ? If so, would it not have been better to

have crucified Adam at once upon the forbidden tree, and made a new man? Would not this have been more creator like than repairing the old one? Or, did God, when he made Adam, supposing the story to be true, exclude himself from the right of making another? Or impose on himself the necessity of breeding from the old stock? Priests should first prove facts, and deduce doctrines from them afterwards. But, instead of this, they assume every thing and prove nothing. Authorities drawn from the bible are no more than authorities drawn from other books, unless it can be proved that the bible is revelation.

This story of the redemption will not stand examination. That man should redeem himself from the sin of eating an apple, by committing a murder on Jesus Christ, is the strangest system of religion ever set up. Deism is perfect purity compared with this. It is an established principle with the quakers not to shed blood—suppose, then, all Jerusalem had been quakers when Christ lived, there would have been nobody to crucify him, and in that case, if man is redeemed by his blood, which is the belief of the church, there could have been no redemption—and the people of Jerusalem must all have been damned, because they were too good to commit murder. The christian system of religion is an outrage on common sense. Why is man afraid to think?

Why do not the christians, to be consistent, make saints of Judas and Pontius Pilate, for they were the persons who accomplished the act of salvation. The merit of a sacrifice, if there can be any merit in it, was never in the thing sacrificed, but in the persons offering up the sacrifice—and, therefore, Judas and Pontius Pilate ought to stand first on the calendar of saints.

THOMAS PAINE.

OF THE WORD RELIGION,

AND OTHER WORDS OF UNCERTAIN SIGNIFICATION.

The word religion is a word of forced application when used with respect to the worship of God. The root of the word is the latin verb *ligo*, to tie or bind. From *ligo*, comes *religo*, to tie or bind over again, or make more fast—from *religo*, comes the

substantive *religio*, which, with the addition of *n* makes the English substantive religion. The French use the word properly—when a woman enters a convent she is called a *noviciat*, that is, she is upon trial or probation. When she takes the oath, she is called a *religieuse*, that is, she is tied or bound by that oath to the performance of it. We use the word in the same kind of sense when we say we will religiously perform the promise that we make.

But the word, without referring to its etymology, has, in the manner it is used, no definitive meaning, because it does not designate what religion a man is of. There is the religion of the Chinese, of the Tartars, of the Bramins, of the Persians, of the Jews, of the Turks, &c.

The word Christianity is equally as vague as the word religion. No two sectaries can agree what it is. It is a *lo here* and *lo there*. The two principal sectaries, Papists and Protestants, have often cut each other's throats about it :—The Papists call the Protestants heretics, and the Protestants call the Papists idolaters. The minor sectaries have shown the same spirit of rancour, but, as the civil law restrains them from blood, they content themselves with preaching damnation against each other.

The word *protestant* has a positive signification in the sense it is used. It means protesting against the authority of the Pope, and this is the only article in which the protestants agree. In every other sense, with respect to religion, the word protestant is as vague as the word christian. When we say an episcopalian, a presbyterian, a baptist, a quaker, we know what those persons are, and what tenets they hold—but when we say a christian, we know he is not a Jew nor a Mahometan, but we know not if he be a trinitarian or an anti-trinitarian, a believer in what is called the immaculate conception, or a disbeliever, a man of seven sacraments, or of two sacraments, or of none. The word christian describes what a man is not, but not what he is.

The word *Theology*, from *Theos*, the Greek word for God, and meaning the study and knowledge of God, is a word, that strictly speaking, belongs to Theists or Deists, and not to the christians. The head of the christian church is the person called Christ—but the head of the church of the Theists, or Deists, as they are more commonly called, from *Deus*, the latin word for God, is God himself, and therefore the word Theology belongs to that church which has Theos, or God, for its head, and not to the christian church

which has the person called Christ for its head. Their technical word is *Christianity*, and they cannot agree what christianity is.

The words revealed religion, and natural religion, require also explanation. They are both invented terms, contrived by the church for the support of priest-craft. With respect to the first, there is no evidence of any such thing, except in the universal revelation that God has made of his power, his wisdom, his goodness, in the structure of the universe, and in all the works of creation. We have no cause or ground from any thing we behold in those works, to suppose God would deal partially by mankind, and reveal knowledge to one nation and withhold it from another, and then damn them for not knowing it. The sun shines an equal quantity of light all over the world—and mankind in all ages and countries are endued with reason, and blessed with sight, to read the visible works of God in the creation, and so intelligent is this book that *he that runs may read.* We admire the wisdom of the ancients, yet they had no bibles, nor books, called revelation. They cultivated the reason that God gave them, studied him in his works, and arose to eminence.

As to the Bible, whether true or fabulous, it is a history, and history is not revelation. If Solomon had seven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines, and if Samson slept in Delilah's lap, and she cut his hair off, the relation of those things is mere history, that needed no revelation from heaven to tell it; neither does it need any revelation to tell us that Samson was a fool for his pains, and Solomon too.

As to the expressions so often used in the Bible, that *the word of the Lord* came to such an one, or such an one, it was the fashion of speaking in those times, like the expression used by a quaker, that the *spirit moveth him*, or that used by priests, that they *have a call.* We ought not to be deceived by phrases because they are ancient. But if we admit the supposition that God would condescend to reveal himself in words we ought not to believe it would be in such idle and profligate stories as are in the Bible, and it is for this reason, among others which our reverence to God inspires, that the Deists deny that the book called the bible is the word of God, or that it is revealed religion.

With respect to the term natural religion, it is, upon the face of it, the opposite of artificial religion, and it is impossible for any man to be certain that what is called *revealed religion*, is not arti-

ficial. Man has the power of making books, inventing stories of God, and calling them revelation, or the word of God. The Koran exists as an instance that this can be done, and we must be credulous indeed to suppose that this is the only instance, and Mahomet the only impostor. The Jews could match him, and the church of Rome could overmatch the Jews. The Mahometans believe the Koran, the Christians believe the Bible, and it is education makes all the difference.

Books, whether Bibles or Korans, carry no evidence of being the work of any other power than man. It is only that which man cannot do that carries the evidence of being the work of a superior power. Man could not invent and make a universe—he could not invent nature, for nature is of divine origin. It is the laws by which the universe is governed. When, therefore, we look through nature up to nature's God, we are in the right road of happiness, but when we trust to books as the word of God, and confide in them as revealed religion, we are afloat on the ocean of uncertainty, and shatter into contending factions. The term, therefore, *natural religion*, explains itself to be *divine religion*, and the term *revealed religion* involves in it the suspicion of being *artificial*.

To show the necessity of understanding the meaning of words, I will mention an instance of a minister, I believe of the episcopalian church of Newark, in Jersey. He wrote and published a book, and entitled it, "*An Antidote to Deism.*" An antidote to *Deism*, must be *Atheism*. It has no other antidote—for what can be an antidote to the belief of a God, but the disbelief of God. Under the tuition of such pastors, what but ignorance and false information can be expected. T. P.

OF CAIN AND ABEL.

The story of Cain and Abel is told in the fourth chapter of Genesis; Cain was the elder brother, and Abel the younger, and Cain killed Abel. The Egyptian story of Typhon and Osiris, and the Jewish story, in Genesis, of Cain and Abel, have the ap-

pearance of being the same story differently told, and that it came originally from Egypt.

In the Egyptian story, Typhon and Osiris are brothers; Typhon is the elder, and Osiris the younger, and Typhon kills Osiris. The story is an allegory on darkness and light; Typhon, the elder brother, is darkness, because darkness was supposed to be more ancient than light: Osiris is the good light who rules during the summer months, and brings forth the fruits of the earth, and is the favourite, as Abel is said to have been, for which Typhon hates him; and when the winter comes, and cold and darkness overspread the earth, Typhon is represented as having killed Osiris out of malice, as Cain is said to have killed Abel.

The two stories are alike in their circumstances and their event, and are probably but the same story; what corroborates this opinion, is, that the fifth chapter of Genesis historically contradicts the reality of the story of Cain and Abel in the fourth chapter, for though the name of *Seth*, a son of Adam, is mentioned in the fourth chapter, he is spoken of in the fifth chapter as if he was the first born of Adam. The chapter begins thus:—

"This is the book of the *generations* of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God created he him. Male and female created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam in the day when they were created. And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years and begat a son, in his own likeness and after his own image, and called his name *Seth*." The rest of the chapter goes on with the genealogy.

Any body reading this chapter, cannot suppose there were any sons born before *Seth*. The chapter begins with what is called *the creation of Adam*, and calls itself the book of the *generations of Adam*, yet no mention is made of such persons as Cain and Abel; one thing, however, is evident on the face of these two chapters, which is, that the same person is not the writer of both; the most blundering historian could not have committed himself in such a manner.

Though I look on every thing in the first ten chapters of Genesis to be fiction, yet fiction historically told should be consistent, whereas these two chapters are not. The Cain and Abel of Genesis appear to be no other than the ancient Egyptian story of Typhon and Osiris, the darkness and the light, which answered very well as an allegory without being believed as a fact.

THE TOWER OF BABEL.

The story of the tower of Babel is told in the eleventh chapter of Genesis. It begins thus :—"And the whole earth (it was but a very little part of it they knew) was of one language and of one speech.—And it came to pass as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. —And they said one to another, *go to*, let us make brick and burn them thoroughly, and they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.—And they said *go to*, let us build us a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.—And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded.—And the Lord said, behold the people is one, and they have all one language, and this they begin to do, and now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do.—*Go to*, let us go down and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.— So (that is, by that means) the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city."

This is the story, and a very foolish inconsistent story it is. In the first place, the familiar and irreverend manner in which the Almighty is spoken of in this chapter, is offensive to a serious mind. As to the project of building a tower whose top should reach to heaven, there never could be a people so foolish as to have such a notion; but to represent the Almighty as jealous of the attempt, as the writer of the story has done, is adding prophanation to folly, "*Go to*," says the builders, "let us build us a tower whose top shall reach to heaven." "*Go to*," says God, "let us go down and confound their language." This quaintness is indecent, and the reason given for it is worse, for, "now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do." This is representing the Almighty as jealous of their getting into heaven.

The story is too ridiculous, even as a fable, to account for the diversity of languages in the world, for which it seems to have been intended.

As to the project of confounding their language for the purpose of making them separate, it is altogether inconsistent; because, instead of producing this effect, it would, by increasing their difficulties, render them more necessary to each other, and cause them to keep together. Where could they go to better themselves?

Another observation upon this story is, the inconsistency of it with respect to the opinion that the bible is the word of God given for the information of mankind: for nothing could so effectually prevent such a word being known by mankind as confounding their language. The people, who after this spoke different languages, could no more understand such a word generally, than the builders of Babel could understand one another. It would have been necessary, therefore, had such word ever been given or intended to be given, that the whole earth should be, as they say it was at first, of one language and of one speech, and that it should never have been confounded.

The case, however, is, that the bible will not bear examination in any part of it, which it would do if it was the word of God. Those who most believe it are those who know least about it, and priests always take care to keep the inconsistent and contradictory parts out of sight. T. P.

Of the religion of Deism compared with the Christian Religion, and the superiority of the former over the latter

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Every person, of whatever religious denomination he may be, is a DEIST in the first article of his Creed. Deism, from the Latin word *Deus*, God, is the belief of a God, and this belief is the first article of every man's creed.

It is on this article, universally consented to by all mankind, that the Deist builds his church, and here he rests. Whenever we step aside from this article, by mixing it with articles of human invention, we wonder into a labyrinth of uncertainty and fable and

become exposed to every kind of imposition by pretenders to revelation. The Persian shows the *Zendavista* of Zoroaster, the lawgiver of Persia, and calls it the divine law; the Bramin shows the *Shaster*, revealed, he says, by God to Brama, and given to him out of a cloud; the Jew shows what he calls the law of Moses, given, he says, by God, on the Mount Sinai; the Christian shows a collection of books and epistles, written by nobody knows who, and called the New Testament; and the Mahometan shows the Koran, given, he says, by God to Mahomet: each of these calls itself *revealed religion*, and the *only* true word of God, and this the followers of each profess to believe from the habit of education, and each believes the others are imposed upon.

But when the divine gift of reason begins to expand itself in the mind and calls man to reflection, he then reads and contemplates God in his works, and not in the books pretending to be revelation. The Creation is the bible of the true believer in God. Every thing in this vast volume inspires him with sublime ideas of the Creator. The little and paltry, and often obscene, tales of the bible sink into wretchedness when put in comparison with this mighty work. The Deist needs none of those tricks and shows called miracles to confirm his faith, for what can be a greater miracle than the Creation itself, and his own existence.

There is a happiness in Deism, when rightly understood, that is not to be found in any other system of religion. All other systems have something in them that either shock our reason, or are repugnant to it, and man, if he thinks at all, must stifle his reason in order to force himself to believe them. But in Deism our reason and our belief become happily united. The wonderful structure of the universe, and every thing we behold in the system of the creation, prove to us, far better than books can do, the existence of a God, and at the same time proclaim his attributes. It is by the exercise of our reason that we are enabled to contemplate God in his works, and imitate him in his ways. When we see his care and goodness extended over all his creatures, it teaches us our duty towards each other, while it calls forth our gratitude to him. It is by forgetting God in his works, and running after the books of pretended revelation that man has wandered from the straight path of duty and happiness, and become by turns the victim of doubt and the dupe of delusion.

Except in the first article in the Christian creed, that of believing

in God, there is not an article in it but fills the mind with doubt, as to the truth of it, the instant man begins to think. Now every article in a creed that is necessary to the happiness and salvation of man, ought to be as evident to the reason and comprehension of man as the first article is, for God has not given us reason for the purpose of confounding us, but that we should use it for our own happiness and his glory.

The truth of the first article is proved by God himself, and is universal; for *the creation is of itself demonstration of the existence of a Creator.* But the second article, that of God's begetting a son, is not proved in like manner, and stands on no other authority than that of a tale. Certain books in what is called the New Testament tell us that Joseph dreamed that the angel told him so. (Matthew chap 1. ver. 20.) "And behold the Angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." The evidence upon this article bears no comparison with the evidence upon the first article, and therefore is not entitled to the same credit, and ought not to be made an article in a creed, because the evidence of it is defective, and what evidence there is, is doubtful and suspicious. We do not believe the first article on the authority of books, whether called Bibles or Korans, nor yet on the visionary authority of dreams, but on the authority of God's own visible works in the creation. The nations who never heard of such books, nor of such people as Jews, Christians, or Mahometans, believe the existence of a God as fully as we do, because it is self evident. The work of man's hands is a proof of the existence of man as fully as his personal appearance would be. When we see a watch, we have as positive evidence of the existence of a watch-maker, as if we saw him; and in like manner the creation is evidence to our reason and our senses of the existence of a Creator. But there is nothing in the works of God that is evidence that he begat a son, nor any thing in the system of creation that corroborates such an idea, and, therefore, we are not authorized in believing it.

But presumption can assume any thing, and therefore it makes Joseph's dream to be of equal authority with the existence of God, and to help it on calls it revelation. It is impossible for the mind of man in its serious moments, however it may have been entangled by education, or beset by priest-craft, not to stand still and

doubt upon the truth of this article and of its creed. But this is not all.

The second article of the Christian creed having brought the son of Mary into the world, (and this Mary, according to the chronological tables, was a girl of only fifteen years of age when this son was born,) the next article goes on to account for his being begotten, which was, that when he grew a man he should be put to death, to expiate, they say, the sin that Adam brought into the world by eating an apple or some kind of forbidden fruit.

But though this is the creed of the church of Rome, from whence the protestants borrowed it, it is a creed which that church has manufactured of itself, for it is not contained in, nor derived from, the book called the New Testament. The four books called the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, which give, or pretend to give, the birth, sayings, life, preaching, and death of Jesus Christ, make no mention of what is called the fall of man; nor is the name of Adam to be found in any of those books, which it certainly would be if the writers of them believed that Jesus was begotten, born, and died for the purpose of redeeming mankind from the sin which Adam had brought into the world. Jesus never speaks of Adam himself, of the Garden of Eden, nor of what is called the fall of man.

But the Church of Rome having set up its new religion which it called Christianity, and invented the creed which it named the apostles' creed, in which it calls Jesus the *only son of God, conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary*, things of which it is impossible that man or woman can have any idea, and consequently no belief but in words; and for which there is no authority but the idle story of Joseph's dream in the first chapter of Matthew, which any designing imposter or foolish fanatic might make. It then manufactured the allegories in the book of Genesis, into fact, and the allegorical tree of life and the tree of knowledge into real trees, contrary to the belief of the first christians, and for which there is not the least authority in any of the books of the New Testament; for in none of them is there any mention made of such place as the Garden of Eden, nor of any thing that is said to have happened there.

But the church of Rome could not erect the person called Jesus into a Saviour of the world without making the allegories in the book of Genesis into fact, though the New Testament, as before

observed, gives no authority for it. All at once the allegorical tree of knowledge became, according to the church, a real tree, the fruit of it real fruit, and the eating of it sinful. As priest-craft was always the enemy of knowledge, because priest-craft supports itself by keeping people in delusion and ignorance, it was consistent with its policy to make the acquisition of knowledge a real sin.

The church of Rome having done this, it then brings forward Jesus the son of Mary as suffering death to redeem mankind from sin, which Adam, it says, had brought into the world by eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge. But as it is impossible for reason to believe such a story, because it can see no reason for it, nor have any evidence of it, the church then tells us we must not regard our reason but must *believe*, as it were, and that through thick and thin, as if God had given man reason like a plaything, or a rattle, on purpose to make fun of him. Reason is the forbidden tree of priest-craft, and may serve to explain the allegory of the forbidden tree of knowledge, for we may reasonably suppose the allegory had some meaning and application at the time it was invented. It was the practice of the eastern nations to convey their meaning by allegory, and relate it in the manner of fact. Jesus followed the same method, yet nobody ever supposed the allegory or parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the prodigal son, the ten virgins, &c. were facts. Why then should the tree of knowledge, which is far more romantic in idea than the parables in the New Testament are, be supposed to be a real tree.* The answer to this is, because the church could not make its new fangled system, which it called Christianity, hold together without it. To have made Christ to die on account of an allegorical tree would have been too bare-faced a fable.

But the account, as it is given of Jesus in the New Testament, even visionary as it is, does not support the creed of the church that he died for the redemption of the world. According to that account he was crucified and buried on the Friday, and rose again in good health on the Sunday morning, for we do not hear that he was sick. This cannot be called dying, and is rather making fun

* The remark of the Emperor Julien, on the story of The tree of Knowledge is worth observing. "If," said he, "there ever had been, or could be, a Tree of Knowledge, instead of God forbidding man to eat thereof, it would be that of which he would order him to eat the most."

of death than suffering it. There are thousands of men and women also, who if they could know they should come back again in good health in about thirty-six hours, would prefer such kind of death for the sake of the experiment, and to know what the other side of the grave was. Why then should that which would be only a voyage of curious amusement to us be magnified into merit and suffering in him? If a God he could not suffer death, for immortality cannot die, and as a man his death could be no more than the death of any other person.

The belief of the redemption of Jesus Christ is altogether an invention of the church of Rome, not the doctrine of the New Testament. What the writers of the New Testament attempted to prove by the story of Jesus is the *resurrection of the same body from the grave*, which was the belief of the Pharisees, in opposition to the Sadducees (a sect of Jews) who denied it. Paul, who was brought up a Pharisee, labours hard at this point, for it was the creed of his own Pharisaical church. The XV chap. 1st of Corinthians is full of supposed cases and assertions about the resurrection of the same body, but there is not a word in it about redemption. This chapter makes part of the funeral service of the Episcopal church. The dogma of the redemption is the fable of priestcraft invented since the time the New Testament was compiled, and the agreeable delusion of it suited with the depravity of immoral livers. When men are taught to ascribe all their crimes and vices to the temptations of the Devil, and to believe that Jesus, by his death, rubs all off and pays their passage to heaven gratis, they become as careless in morals as a spendthrift would be of money, were he told that his father had engaged to pay off all his scores. It is a doctrine, not only dangerous to morals in this world, but to our happiness in the next world, because it holds out such a cheap, easy, and lazy way of getting to heaven as has a tendency to induce men to hug the delusion of it to their own injury.

But there are times when men have serious thoughts, and it is at such times, when they begin to think, that they begin to doubt the truth of the Christian Religion, and well they may, for it is too fanciful and too full of conjecture, inconsistency, improbability, and irrationality, to afford consolation to the thoughtful man. His reason revolts against his creed. He sees that none of its articles are proved, or can be proved. He may believe that such a person as is called Jesus (for Christ was not his name) was

born and grew to be a man, because it is no more than a natural and probable case. But who is to prove he is the son of God, that he was begotten by the Holy Ghost? Of these things there can be no proof; and that which admits not of proof, and is against the laws of probability, and the order of nature which God himself has established, is not an object for belief. God has not given man reason to embarrass him, but to prove his being imposed upon.

He may believe that Jesus was crucified, because many others were crucified, but who is to prove he was crucified *for the sins of the world?* This article has no evidence, not even in the New Testament; and if it had where is the proof that the New Testament, in relating things neither probable nor proveable, is to be believed as true? When an article in a creed does not admit of proof nor of probability, the salvo is to call it revelation; but this is only putting one difficulty in the place of another, for it is as impossible to prove a thing to be revelation as it is to prove that Mary was gotten with child by the Holy Ghost.

Here it is that the religion of Deism is superior to the Christian religion. It is free from all those invented and torturing articles that shock our reason or injure our humanity, and with which the Christian religion abounds. Its creed is pure and sublimely simple. It believes in God and there it rests. It honours reason as the choicest gift of God to man, and the faculty by which he is enabled to contemplate the power, wisdom and goodness of the Creator displayed in the creation; and reposing itself on his protection, both here and hereafter, it avoids all presumptuous beliefs, and rejects, as the fabulous inventions of men, all books pretending to revelation.

T. P.

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY, STYLING ITSELF THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

The New-York Gazette of the 16*th* (*August*) *contains the following article*—"*On Tuesday, a committee of the Missionary Society, consisting chiefly of distinguished Clergymen, had an interview, at the City Hotel, with the chiefs of the Osage tribe of Indians, now in this City,* (*New-York*) *to whom they presented a Bible, together with an Address, the object of which was, to inform them that this* good book *contained the* will and laws *of the* GREAT SPIRIT."

It is to be hoped some humane person will, on account of our people on the frontiers, as well as of the Indians, undeceive them with respect to the present the Missionaries have made them, and which they call a *good book*, containing, they say, *the will and laws of the* GREAT SPIRIT. Can those Missionaries suppose that the assassination of men, women, and children, and sucking infants, related in the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, &c. and blasphemously said to be done by the command of the Lord, the Great Spirit, can be edifying to our Indian neighbours, or advantageous to us? Is not the Bible warfare the same kind of warfare as the Indians themselves carry on, that of indiscriminate destruction, and against which humanity shudders; can the horrid examples and vulgar obscenity, with which the Bible abounds, improve the morals or civilize the manners of the Indians? Will they learn sobriety and decency from drunken Noah and beastly Lot; or will their daughters be edified by the example of Lot's daughters? Will the prisoners they take in war be treated the better by their knowing the horrid story of Samuel's hewing Agag in pieces like a block of wood, or David's putting them under harrows of iron? Will not the shocking accounts of the destruction of the Cana-

anites, when the Israelites invaded their country, suggest the idea that we may serve them in the same manner, or the accounts stir them up to do the like to our people on the frontiers, and then justify the assassination by the Bible the Missionaries have given them? Will those Missionary Societies never leave off doing mischief?

In the account which this missionary committee give of their interview, they make the chief of the Indians to say, that, "as neither he nor his people could read it, he begged that some good white man might be sent to instruct them."

It is necessary the General Government keep a strict eye over those Missionary Societies, who, under the pretence of instructing the Indians, send spies into their country to find out the best lands. No society should be permitted to have intercourse with the Indian tribes, nor send any person among them, but with the knowledge and consent of the Government. The present administration has brought the Indians into a good disposition, and is improving them in the moral and civil comforts of life; but if these self-created societies be suffered to interfere, and send their speculating Missionaries among them, the laudable object of government will be defeated. Priests, we know, are not remarkable for doing any thing gratis; they have in general some scheme in every thing they do, either to impose on the ignorant, or derange the operations of government.

A FRIEND TO THE INDIANS.

OF THE SABBATH DAY OF CONNECTICUT.

The word Sabbath, means REST, that is, cessation from labour; but the stupid Blue Laws* of Connecticut make a labour of rest, for they oblige a person to sit still from sun-rise to sun-set on a Sabbath day, which is hard work. Fanaticism made those laws,

* They were called Blue Laws because they were originally printed on blue paper.

and hypocrisy pretends to reverence them, for where such laws prevail hypocrisy will prevail also.

One of those laws says, "No person shall run on a Sabbath-day, nor walk in his garden, nor elsewhere, but reverently to and from meeting." These fanatical hypocrites forgot that God dwells not in temples made with hands, and that the earth is full of his glory. One of the finest scenes and subjects of religious contemplation is to walk into the woods and fields, and survey the works of the God of the Creation. The wide expanse of heaven, the earth covered with verdure, the lofty forest, the waving corn, the magnificent roll of mighty rivers, and the murmuring melody of the cheerful brooks, are scenes that inspire the mind with gratitude and delight; but this the gloomy Calvinist of Connecticut, must not behold on a Sabbath-day. Entombed within the walls of his dwelling, he shuts from his view the temple of creation. The sun shines no joy to him. The gladdening voice of nature calls on him in vain. He is deaf, dumb, and blind to every thing around him that God has made. Such is the Sabbath-day of Connecticut.

From whence could come this miserable notion of devotion? It comes from the gloominess of the Calvinistic creed. If men love darkness rather than light, because their works are evil, the ulcerated mind of a Calvinist, who sees God only in terror, and sits brooding over the scenes of hell and damnation, can have no joy in beholding the glories of the creation. Nothing in that mighty and wondrous system accords with his principles or his devotion. He sees nothing there that tells him that God created millions on purpose to be damned, and that the children of a span long are born to burn forever in hell. The creation preaches a different doctrine to this. We there see that the care and goodness of God is extended impartially over all the creatures he has made. The worm of the earth shares his protection equally with the elephant of the desert. The grass that springs beneath our feet grows by his bounty as well as the cedars of Lebanon. Every thing in the Creation reproaches the Calvinist with unjust ideas of God, and disowns the hardness and ingratitude of his principles. Therefore he shuns the sight of them on a Sabbath-day.

AN ENEMY TO CANT AND IMPOSITION.

OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT.

Archbishop Tillotson says, "The difference between the style of the Old and New Testament is so very remarkable, that one of the greatest sects in the primitive times, did, upon this very ground, found their heresy of two Gods, the one evil, fierce, and cruel, whom they called the God of the Old Testament; the other good, kind, and merciful, whom they called the God of the New Testament; so great a difference is there between the representations that are given of God in the books of the Jewish and Christian Religion, as to give, at least, some colour and pretence to an imagination of two Gods." Thus far Tillotson.

But the case was, that as the Church had picked out several passages from the Old Testament, which she most absurdly and falsely calls prophecies of Jesus Christ, (whereas there is no prophecy of any such person, as any one may see by examining the passages and the cases to which they apply,) she was under the necessity of keeping up the credit of the Old Testament, because if that fell the other would soon follow, and the Christian system of faith would soon be at an end. As a book of morals, there are several parts of the New Testament that are good; but they are no other than what had been preached in the Eastern world several hundred years before Christ was born. Confucius, the Chinese philosopher, who lived five hundred years before the time of Christ, says, *acknowledge thy benefits by the return of benefits but never revenge injuries.*

The clergy in Popish countries were cunning enough to know, that if the Old Testament was made public, the fallacy of the New, with respect to Christ, would be detected, and they prohibited the use of it, and always took it away wherever they found it. The Deists, on the contrary, always encouraged the reading it, that people might see and judge for themselves, that a book so full of contradictions and wickedness, could not be the word of God, and that we dishonour God by ascribing it to him.

A TRUE DEIST.

Hints towards forming a Society for inquiring into the truth or falsehood of ancient history, so far as history is connected with systems of religion ancient and modern.

It has been customary to class history into three divisions, distinguished by the names of Sacred, Profane, and Ecclesiastical. By the first is meant the Bible; by the second, the history of nations, of men and things; and by the third, the history of the church and its priesthood.

Nothing is more easy than to give names, and, therefore, mere names signify nothing, unless they lead to the discovery of some cause for which that name was given. For example, *Sunday* is the name given to the first day of the week, in the English language, and it is the same in the Latin, that is, it has the same meaning, (*Dies solis*,) and also in the German, and in several other languages. Why then was this name given to that day? Because it was the day dedicated by the ancient world to the luminary, which in English we call the Sun, and, therefore, the day *Sun-day*, or the day of the Sun; as in the like manner we call the second day Monday, the day dedicated to the Moon.

Here the name *Sunday*, leads to the cause of its being called so, and we have visible evidence of the fact, because we behold the Sun from whence the name comes; but this is not the case when we distinguish one part of history from another by the name of *Sacred*. All histories have been written by men. We have no evidence, nor any cause to believe, that any have been written by God. That part of the Bible called the Old Testament, is the history of the Jewish nation, from the time of Abraham, which begins in the 11th chap. of Genesis, to the downfall of that nation by Nebuchadnezzar, and is no more entitled to be called sacred than any other history. It is altogether the contrivance of priestcraft that has given it that name. So far from its being *sacred*, it has not the appearance of being true in many of the things it relates. It must be better authority than a book, which any impostor might make, as Mahomet made the Koran, to make a thoughtful man believe that the sun and moon stood still, or that

Moses and Aaron turned the Nile, which is larger than the Delaware, into blood, and that the Egyptian magicians did the same. These things have too much the appearance of romance to be believed for fact.

It would be of use to inquire, and ascertain the time, when that part of the Bible called the Old Testament first appeared. From all that can be collected there was no such book till after the Jews returned from captivity in Babylon, and that it is the work of the Pharisees of the Second Temple. How they came to make the 19th chapter of the 2d book of Kings, and the 37th of Isaiah, word for word alike, can only be accounted for by their having no plan to go by, and not knowing what they were about. The same is the case with respect to the last verses in the 2d book of Chronicles, and the first verses in Ezra, they also are word for word alike, which shows that the Bible has been put together at random.

But besides these things there is great reason to believe we have been imposed upon, with respect to the antiquity of the Bible, and especially with respect to the books ascribed to Moses. Herodotus, who is called the father of history, and is the most ancient historian whose works have reached to our time, and who travelled into Egypt, conversed with the priests, historians, astronomers, and learned men of that country, for the purpose of obtaining all the information of it he could, and who gives an account of the ancient state of it, makes no mention of such a man as Moses, though the Bible makes him to have been the greatest hero there, nor of any one circumstance mentioned in the book of Exodus, respecting Egypt, such as turning the rivers into blood, the dust into lice, the death of the first born throughout all the land of Egypt, the passage of the Red Sea, the drowning of Pharaoh and all his host, things which could not have been a secret in Egypt, and must have been generally known, had they been facts; and, therefore, as no such things were known in Egypt, nor any such man as Moses, at the time Herodotus was there, which is about two thousand two hundred years ago, it shows that the account of these things in the books ascribed to Moses is a made story of later times, that is, after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, and that Moses is not the author of the books ascribed to him.

With respect to the cosmogony, or account of the creation, in the first chapter of Genesis, of the Garden of Eden in the second

chapter, and of what is called the fall of man in the third chapter, there is something concerning them we are not historically acquainted with. In none of the books of the Bible, after Genesis, are any of these things mentioned, or even alluded to. How is this to be accounted for? The obvious inference is, that either they were not known, or not believed to be facts, by the writers of the other books of the Bible, and that Moses is not the author of the chapters where these accounts are given.

The next question on the case is, how did the Jews come by these notions, and at what time were they written.

To answer this question we must first consider what the state of the world was at the time the Jews began to be a people, for the Jews are but a modern race compared with the antiquity of other nations. At the time there were, even by their own account, but thirteen Jews or Israelites in the world, *Jacob and his twelve sons*, and four of these were bastards, the nations of Egypt, Chaldea, Persia, and India, were great and populous, abounding in learning and science, particularly in the knowledge of astronomy, of which the Jews were always ignorant. The chronological tables mention, that eclipses were observed at Babylon above two thousand years before the Christian era, which was before there was a single Jew or Israelite in the world.

All those ancient nations had their cosmogonies, that is, their accounts how the creation was made, long before there was such people as Jews or Israelites. An account of these cosmogonies of India and Persia, is given by Henry Lord, Chaplain to the East India Company, at Surat, and published in London in 1630. The writer of this has seen a copy of the edition of 1630, and made extracts from it. The work, which is now scarce, was dedicated by Lord to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

We know that the Jews were carried captive into Babylon, by Nebuchadnezzar, and remained in captivity several years, when they were liberated by Cyrus, king of Persia. During their captivity they would have had an opportunity of acquiring some knowledge of the cosmogony of the Persians, or at least of getting some ideas how to fabricate one to put at the head of their own history after their return from captivity. This will account for the cause, for some cause there must have been, that no mention, nor reference is made to the cosmogony in Genesis in any of the books of

the Bible, supposed to have been written before the captivity, nor is the name of Adam to be found in any of those books.

The books of Chronicles were written after the return of the Jews from captivity, for the third chapter of the first book gives a list of all the Jewish kings from David to Zedekiah, who was carried captive into Babylon, and to four generations beyond the time of Zedekiah. In the first verse of the first chapter of this book the name of Adam is mentioned, but not in any book in the Bible, written before that time, nor could it be, for Adam and Eve are names taken from the cosmogony of the Persians. Henry Lord, in his book, written from Surat, and dedicated, as I have already said, to the Archbishop of Canterbury, says, that in the Persian cosmogony, the name of the first man was *Adamoh*, and of the woman *Hevah*.* From hence comes the Adam and Eve of the book of Genesis. In the cosmogony of India, of which I shall speak in a future number, the name of the first man was *Pourous*, and of the woman *Parcoutee*. We want a knowledge of the Sanscrit language of India to understand the meaning of the names, and I mention it in this place, only to show that it is from the cosmogony of Persia, rather than that of India, that the cosmogony in Genesis has been fabricated by the Jews, who returned from captivity by the liberality of Cyrus, king of Persia. There is, however, reason to conclude, on the authority of Sir William Jones, who resided several years in India, that these names were very expressive in the language to which they belonged, for in speaking of this language, he says, (see the Asiatic researches,) "The Sanscrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of wonderful structure; it is more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either."

These hints, which are intended to be continued, will serve to show that a society for inquiring into the ancient state of the world, and the state of ancient history, so far as history is connected with systems of religion ancient and modern, may become a useful and instructive institution. There is good reason to believe we have been in great error, with respect to the antiquity of the Bible, as well as imposed upon by its contents. Truth ought to be the object of every man; for without truth there can be no real happiness

* In an English edition of the Bible, in 1583, the first woman is called Hevah. EDITOR OF THE PROSPECT.

to a thoughtful mind, or any assurance of happiness hereafter. It is the duty of man to obtain all the knowledge he can, and then make the best use of it. T. P.

TO MR. MOORE, OF NEW-YORK,

COMMONLY CALLED

BISHOP MOORE.

I have read in the newspapers your account of the visit you made to the unfortunate General Hamilton, and of administering to him a ceremony of your church which you call the *Holy Communion.*

I regret the fate of General Hamilton, and I so far hope with you that it will be a warning to thoughtless man not to sport away the life that God has given him; but with respect to other parts of your letter I think it very reprehensible, and betrays great ignorance of what true religion is. But you are a priest, you get your living by it, and it is not your worldly interest to undeceive yourself.

After giving an account of your administering to the deceased what you call the Holy Communion, you add, "By reflecting on this melancholy event let the humble believer be encouraged ever to hold fast that precious faith which is the *only source of true consolation* in the last extremity of nature. Let the infidel be persuaded to abandon his opposition to the Gospel."

To show you, sir, that your promise of consolation from scripture has no foundation to stand upon, I will cite to you one of the greatest falsehoods upon record, and which was given, as the record says, for the purpose, and as a promise, of consolation.

In the epistle called "the First Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians," (chap. 4,) the writer consoles the Thessalonians as to the case of their friends who were already dead. He does this by informing them, and he does it he says, by the word of the Lord, (a

most notorious falsehood,) that the general resurrection of the dead, and the ascension of the living, will be in his and their days; that their friends will then come to life again; that the dead in Christ will rise first.—"Then WE (says he, v. 17) which *are alive and remain* shall be *caught up* together with THEM *in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air*, and so shall we ever be with the Lord—wherefore *comfort* one another with these words."

Delusion and falsehood cannot be carried higher than they are in this passage. You, sir, are but a novice in the art. The words admit of no equivocation. The whole passage is in the first person and the present tense, "*We* which *are alive*." Had the writer meant a future time, and a distant generation, it must have been in the third person and the future tense. "*They* who *shall then* be alive." I am thus particular for the purpose of nailing you down to the text, that you may not ramble from it, nor put other constructions upon the words than they will bear, which priests are very apt to do.

Now, sir, it is impossible for serious man, to whom God has given the divine gift of reason, and who employs that reason to reverence and adore the God that gave it, it is, I say, impossible for such a man to put confidence in a book that abounds with fable and falsehood as the New Testament does. This passage is but a sample of what I could give you.

You call on those whom you style "*infidels*," (and they in return might call you an idolater, a worshipper of false gods, a preacher of false doctrine,) "to abandon their opposition to the Gospel." Prove, sir, the Gospel to be true, and the opposition will cease of itself; but until you do this (which we know you cannot do) you have no right to expect they will notice your call. If by *infidels* you mean *Deists*, (and you must be exceedingly ignorant of the origin of the word Deist, and know but little of *Deus*, to put that construction upon it,) you will find yourself over-matched if you begin to engage in a controversy with them. Priests may dispute with priests, and sectaries with sectaries, about the meaning of what they *agree* to call scripture, and end as they began; but when you engage with a Deist you must keep to fact. Now, sir, you cannot prove a single article of your religion to be true, and we tell you so publicly. Do it, *if you can*. The Deistical article, *the belief of a God*, with which your creed begins, has been borrowed by your church from the ancient Deists, and even this

article you dishonour by putting a *dream-begotten* phantom* which you call his son, over his head, and treating God as if he was superanuated. Deism is the only profession of religion that admits of worshipping and reverencing God in purity, and the only one on which the thoughtful mind can repose with undisturbed tranquillity. God is almost forgotten in the Christian religion. Every thing, even the creation, is ascribed to the son of Mary.

In religion, as in every thing else, perfection consists in simplicity. The Christian religion of Gods within Gods, like wheels within wheels, is like a complicated machine that never goes right, and every projector in the art of Christianity is trying to mend it. It is its defects that have caused such a number and variety of tinkers to be hammering at it, and still it goes wrong. In the visible world no time-keeper can go equally true with the sun ; and in like manner, no complicated religion can be equally true with the pure and unmixed religion of Deism.

Had you not offensively glanced at a description of men whom you call by a false name, you would not have been troubled nor honored with this address ; neither has the writer of it any desire or intention to enter into controversy with you. He thinks the temporal establishment of your church politically unjust and offensively unfair ; but with respect to religion itself, distinct from temporal establishments, he is happy in the enjoyment of his own, and he leaves you to make the best you can of yours.

A MEMBER OF THE DEISTICAL CHURCH.

* The first chapter of Matthew, relates that Joseph, the betrothed husband of Mary, dreamed that the angel told him that his intended bride was with child by the Holy Ghost. It is not every husband, whether carpenter or priest, that can be so easily satisfied, for lo! it was a dream. Whether Mary was in a dream when this was done we are not told. It is, however, a comical story. There is no woman living can understand it.

TO JOHN MASON,

One of the Ministers of the Scotch Presbyterian Church, of New-York, with remarks on his account of the visit he made to the late General Hamilton.

"*Come now, let us* REASON *together saith the Lord.*" This is one of the passages you quoted from your Bible, in your conversation with General Hamilton, as given in your letter, signed with your name, and published in the Commercial Advertiser, and other New-York papers, and I re-quote the passage to show that your *text* and your *Religion* contradict each other.

It is impossible to reason upon things *not comprehensible by reason*; and, therefore, if you keep to your text, which priests seldom do, (for they are generally either above it, or below it, or forget it,) you must admit a religion to which reason can apply, and this certainly is not the Christian religion.

There is not an article in the Christian religion that is cognizable by reason. The Deistical article of your religion, *the belief of a God*, is no more a Christian article, than it is a Mahometan article. It is an universal article, common to all religions, and which is held in greater purity by Turks than by Christians; but the Deistical church is the only one which holds it in real purity; because that church acknowledges no co-partnership with God. It believes in him solely; and knows nothing of Sons, married Virgins, nor Ghosts. It holds all these things to be the fables of priest-craft.

Why then do you talk of reason, or refer to it, since your religion has nothing to do with reason, nor reason with that. You tell people as you told Hamilton, that they must have *faith!* Faith in what? You ought to know that before the mind can have faith in any thing, it must either know it as a fact, or see cause to believe it on the probability of that kind of evidence that is cognizable by reason; but your religion is not within either of these cases; for, in the first place, you cannot prove it be fact; and in the second place, you cannot support it by reason, not only because it is not cognizable by reason, but because it is contrary to reason. What reason can there be in supposing, or believing, that God put *himself to death, to satisfy*

himself, and be revenged on the Devil on account of Adam; for tell the story which way you will it comes to this at last.

As you can make no appeal to reason in support of an unreasonable religion, you then (and others of your profession) bring yourselves off by telling people, they must not believe in reason but in *revelation.* This is the artifice of habit without reflection. It is putting *words* in the place of *things;* for do you not see that when you tell people to believe in revelation, you must first prove that what you *call* revelation, *is* revelation; and as you cannot do this, you put the *word* which is easily spoken, in the place of the *thing* you cannot prove. You have no more evidence that your Gospel is revelation, than the Turks have that their Koran is revelation, and the only difference between them and you is, that they preach their delusion and you preach yours.

In your conversation with General Hamilton, you say to him, "The *simple truths* of the Gospel which require *no abstruse investigation*, but faith in the veracity of *God, who cannot lie*, are best suited to your present condition."

If those matters you call "*simple truths*," are what you call them, and require no abstruse investigation, they would be so obvious that reason would easily comprehend them; yet the doctrine you preach at other times is, *that the mysteries of the Gospel are beyond the reach of reason.* If your first position be true, that they are *simple truths*, priests are unnecessary, for we do not want preachers to tell us the sun shines; and if your second be true, the case, as to effect, is the same, for it is waste of money to pay a man to explain unexplainable things, and loss of time to listen to him. That *God cannot lie*, is no advantage to your argument, because it is no proof that priests cannot, or that the Bible does not. Did not Paul lie when he told the Thessalonians that the general resurrection of the dead would be in his life-time, and that he should go up alive along with them into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. 1 Thes. chap. 4. v. 27.

You spoke of what you call, "*the precious blood of Christ.*" This savage style of language belongs to the priests of the Christian religion. The professors of this religion say they are shocked at the accounts of human sacrifices of which they read in the histories of some countries. Do they not see that their own religion is founded on a human sacrifice, the blood of man, of which their priests talk like so many butchers. It is no wonder

the Christian religion has been so bloody in its effects, for it began in blood, and many thousands of human sacrifices have since been offered on the altar of the Christian religion.

It is necessary to the character of a religion, as being true, and immutable as God himself is, that the evidence of it be equally the same through all periods of time and circumstance. This is not the case with the Christian religion, nor with that of the Jews that preceded it, (for there was a time and that within the knowledge of history, when these religions did not exist,) nor is it the case with any religion we know of but the religion of Deism. In this the evidences are eternal and universal.—"*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work, —Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.*"* But all other religions are made to arise from some local circumstance, and are introduced by some temporary trifle which its partizans call a miracle, but of which there is no proof but the story of it.

The Jewish religion, according to the history of it, began in a *wilderness*, and the Christian religion in a *stable*. The Jewish books tell us of wonders exhibited upon mount Sinai. It happened that nobody lived there to contradict the account. The Christian books tell us of a star that hung over the *stable* at the birth of Jesus. There is no star there now, nor any person living that saw it. But all the stars in the heavens bear eternal evidence to the truth of Deism. It did not begin in a stable, nor in a wilderness. It began every where. The theatre of the universe is the place of its birth.

As adoration paid to any being but GOD himself is idolatary, the Christian religion by paying adoration to a man, born of a woman, called Mary, belongs to the idolatrous class of religions, consequently the consolation drawn from it is delusion. Between you and your rival in communion ceremonies, Dr. Moore of the

* This Psalm (19) which is a *Deistical Psalm*, is so much in the manner of some parts of the book of Job, (which is not a book of the Jews, and does not belong to the bible,) that it has the appearance of having been translated into Hebrew from the same language in which the book of Job was originally written, and brought by the Jews from Chaldea or Persia, when they returned from captivity. The contemplation of the heavens made a great part of the religious devotion of the Chaldeans and Persians, and their religious festivals were regulated by the progress of the sun through the twelve signs of the Zodiac. But the Jews knew nothing about the Heavens, or they would not have told the foolish story of the sun's standing still upon a hill, and the moon in a valley. What could they want the moon for in the day time.

Episcopal church, you have, in order to make yourselves appear of some importance, reduced General Hamilton's character to that of a feeble minded man, who in going out of the world wanted a passport from a priest. Which of you was first or last applied to for this purpose is a matter of no consequence.

The man, sir, who puts his trust and confidence in God, that leads a just and moral life, and endeavours to do good, does not trouble himself about priests when his hour of departure comes, nor permit priests to trouble themselves about him. They are in general mischievous beings where character is concerned; a consultation of priests is worse than a consultation of physicians.

A MEMBER OF THE DEISTICAL CONGREGATION.

ON DEISM, AND THE WRITINGS OF THOMAS PAINE.

The following reflections, written last winter, were occasioned by *certain* expressions in some of the public papers against Deism and the writings of Thomas Paine on that subject.

"*Great is Diana of the Ephesians*," was the cry of the people of Ephesus;* and the cry of "*our holy religion*," has been the cry of superstition in some instances, and of hypocrisy in others, from that day to this.

The Brahmin, the follower of Zoroaster, the Jew, the Mahometan, the church of Rome, the Greek church, the protestant church, split into several hundred contradictory sectaries, preaching, in some instances, damnation against each other, all cry out, "*our holy religion*." The Calvinist, who damns children of a span long to hell to burn for ever for the glory of God, (and this is called Christianity,) and the Universalist, who preaches that all shall be saved and none shall be damned, (and this also is called Christianity,) boasts alike of their *holy religion* and their Christian faith. Something more, therefore, is necessary than mere *cry* and wholesale assertion, and that something is TRUTH; and as

* Acts, chap. xix. ver. 28.

inquiry is the road to truth, he that is opposed to inquiry is not a friend to truth.

The God of Truth is not the God of fable; when, therefore, any book is introduced into the world as the word of God, and made a ground-work for religion, it ought to be scrutinized more than other books to see if it bear evidence of being what it is called. Our reverence to God demands that we do this, lest we ascribe to God what is not his, and our duty to ourselves demand it lest we take fable for fact, and rest our hope of salvation on a false foundation. It is not our calling a book *holy* that makes it so, any more than our calling a religion holy that entitles it to the name. Inquiry, therefore, is necessary in order to arrive at truth. But inquiry must have some principle to proceed on, some standard to judge by, superior to human authority.

When we survey the works of creation, the revolutions of the planetary system, and the whole economy of what is called nature, which is no other than the laws the Creator has prescribed to matter, we see unerring order and universal harmony reigning throughout the whole. No one part contradicts another. The sun does not run against the moon, nor the moon against the sun, nor the planets against each other. Every thing keeps its appointed time and place. This harmony in the works of God is so obvious, that the farmer of the field, though he cannot calculate eclipses, is as sensible of it as the philosophical astronomer. He sees the God of order in every part of the visible universe.

Here, then, is the standard to which every thing must be brought that pretends to be the work or word of God, and by this standard it must be judged, independently of any thing and every thing that man can say or do. His opinion is like a feather in the scale compared with the standard that God himself has set up.

It is, therefore, by this standard, that the Bible, and all other books pretending to be the word of God, (and there are many of them in the world,) must be judged, and not by the opinions of men or the decrees of ecclesiastical councils. These have been so contradictory, that they have often rejected in one council what they had voted to be the word of God in another; and admitted what had been before rejected. In this state of uncertainty in which we are, and which is rendered still more uncertain by the numerous contradictory sectaries that have sprung up since the time of Luther and Calvin, what is man to do? The answer is

easy. Begin at the root—begin with the Bible itself. Examine it with the utmost strictness. It is our duty so to do. Compare the parts with each other, and the whole with the harmonious, magnificent order that reigns throughout the visible universe, and the result will be, that if the same almighty wisdom that created the universe, dictated also the Bible, the Bible will be as harmonious and as magnificent in all its parts, and in the whole, as the universe is. But if, instead of this, the parts are found to be discordant, contradicting in one place what is said in another, (as in 2 Sam. chap. xxiv. v. 1, and 1 Chron. chap. xxi. ver. 1, where the same action is ascribed to God in one book and to Satan in the other,) abounding also in idle and obscene stories, and representing the Almighty as a passionate, whimsical Being, continually changing his mind, making and unmaking his own works as if he did not know what he was about, we may take it for certainty that the Creator of the universe is not the author of such a book, that it is not the word of God, and that to call it so is to dishonour his name. The Quakers, who are a people more moral and regular in their conduct than the people of other sectaries, and generally allowed so to be, do not hold the Bible to be the word of God. They call it *a history of the times*, and a bad history it is, and also a history of bad men and of bad actions, and abounding with bad examples.

For several centuries past the dispute has been about doctrines. It is now about fact. Is the Bible the word of God, or is it not? for until this point is established, no doctrine drawn from the Bible can afford real consolation to man, and he ought to be careful he does not mistake delusion for truth. This is a case that concerns all men alike.

There has always existed in Europe, and also in America, since its establishments, a numerous description of men, (I do not here mean the Quakers,) who did not, and do not believe the Bible to be the word of God. These men never formed themselves into an established society, but are to be found in all the sectaries that exist, and are more numerous than any, perhaps equal to all, and are daily increasing. From *Deus*, the latin word for God, they have been denominated *Deists*, that is, believers in God. It is the most honourable appellation that can be given to man, because it is derived immediately from the Deity. It is not an artificial name like episcopalian, presbyterian, &c. but is a name of sacred signification, and to revile it is to revile the name of God.

Since then there is so much doubt and uncertainty about the Bible, some asserting, and others denying it to be the word of God, it is best that the whole matter come out. It is necessary, for the information of the world, that it should. A better time cannot offer than whilst the government, patronizing no one sect or opinion in preference to another, protects equally the rights of all; and certainly every man must spurn the idea of an ecclesiastical tyranny, engrossing the rights of the press, and holding it free only for itself.

Whilst the terrors of the church, and the tyranny of the state, hung like a pointed sword over Europe, men were commanded to believe what the church told them, or go to the stake. All inquiries into the authenticity of the Bible were shut out by the inquisition. We ought, therefore, to suspect, that a great mass of information respecting the Bible, and the introduction of it into the world, has been suppressed by the united tyranny of church and state, for the purpose of keeping people in ignorance, and which ought to be known.

The Bible has been received by the protestants on the authority of the church of Rome, and on no other authority. It is she that has said it is the word of God. We do not admit the authority of that church with respect to its pretended *infallibility*, its manufactured miracles, its setting itself up to forgive sins, its amphibious doctrine of transubstantiation, &c.; and we ought to be watchful with respect to any book introduced by her, or her ecclesiastical councils, and called by her the word of God: and the more so, because it was by propagating that belief and supporting it by fire and faggot, that she kept up her temporal power. That the belief of the Bible does no good in the world, may be seen by the irregular lives of those, as well priests as laymen, who profess to believe it to be the word of God, and the moral lives of the Quakers who do not. It abounds with too many ill examples to be made a rule for moral life, and were a man to copy after the lives of some of its most celebrated characters, he would come to the gallows..

Thomas Paine has written to show that the Bible is not the word of God, that the books it contains were not written by the persons to whom they are ascribed, that it is an anonymous book, and that we have no authority for calling it the word of God, or for saying it was written by inspired penmen, since we do not know who the writers were. This is the opinion not only of Thomas

Paine, but of thousands and tens of thousands of the most respectable characters in the United States and in Europe. These men have the same right to their opinions as others have to contrary opinions, and the same right to publish them. Ecclesiastical tyranny is not admissible in the United States.

With respect to morality, the writings of Thomas Paine are remarkable for purity and benevolence; and though he often enlivens them with touches of wit and humour, he never loses sight of the real solemnity of his subject. No man's morals, either with respect to his Maker, himself, or his neighbour, can suffer by the writings of Thomas Paine.

It is now too late to abuse Deism, especially in a country where the press is free, *or where free presses can be established.* It is a religion that has God for its patron and derives its name from him. The thoughtful mind of man, wearied with the endless contentions of sectaries against sectaries, doctrines against doctrines, and priests against priests, finds its repose at last in the contemplative belief and worship of one God and the practice of morality, for as Pope wisely says,

"He can't be wrong, whose life is in the right."

OF THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Address to the believers in the book called the Scriptures.

The New Testament contains twenty-seven books, of which four are called Gospels; one called the Acts of the Apostles; fourteen called Epistles of Paul; one of James; two of Peter; three of John; one of Jude; and one called the Revelation.

None of those books have the appearance of being written by the persons whose names they bear, neither do we know who the authors were. They come to us on no other authority than the church of Rome, which the Protestant Priests, especially those of New England, call the *Whore of Babylon.* This church appointed sundry councils to be held, to compose creeds for the people, and to regulate church affairs. Two of the principal of these councils were that of Nice, and of Laodocia, (names of the places where the councils were held,) about three hundred and fifty years

after the time that Jesus is said to have lived. Before this time there was no such book as the New Testament. But the church could not well go on without having something to show, as the Persians showed the Zendavista, revealed, they say, by God to Zoroaster; the Bramins of India, the Shaster, revealed, they say, by God to Bruma, and given to him out of a dusky cloud; the Jews, the books they call the Law of Moses, given they say also out of a cloud on Mount Sinai; the church set about forming a code for itself out of such materials as it could find or pick up. But where they got those materials, in what language they were written, or whose hand writing they were, or whether they were originals or copies, or on what authority they stood we know nothing of, nor does the New Testament tell us. The church was resolved to have a New Testament, and as after the lapse of more than three hundred years, no hand-writing could be proved or disproved, the church, who like former impostors, had then gotten possession of the state, had every thing its own way. It invented creeds, such as that called the Apostle's Creed, the Nicean Creed, the Athanasian Creed, and out of the loads of rubbish that were presented, it voted four to be Gospels, and others to be Epistles, as we now find them arranged.

Of those called Gospels, above forty were presented, each pretending to be genuine. Four only were voted in, and entitled, the Gospel *according* to St. Matthew—the Gospel *according* to St. Mark—the Gospel *according* to St. Luke—the Gospel *according* to St. John.

This word *according*, shows that those books have not been written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, but according to some accounts or traditions, picked up concerning them. The word according means agreeing with, and necessarily includes the idea of two things, or two persons. We cannot say, *The Gospel written by Matthew according to Matthew;* but we might say, the the Gospel of some other person according to what was reported to have been the opinion of Matthew. Now we do not know who those other persons were, nor whether what they wrote accorded with any thing that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John might have said. There is too little evidence, and too much contrivance, about those books to merit credit.

The next book after those called Gospels, is that called the Acts of the Apostles. This book is anonymous; neither do the coun-

cils that compiled or contrived the New Testament tell us how they came by it. The church, to supply this defect, say it was written by Luke, which shows that the church and its priests have not compared that called the Gospel according to St. Luke, and the Acts together, for the two contradict each other. The book of Luke, chap. 24, makes Jesus ascend into heaven the very same day that it makes him rise from the grave. The book of Acts, chap. i. v. 3, says, that he remained on the earth forty days after his crucifixion. There is no believing what either of them says.

The next to the book of Acts is that entitled. "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle* to the Romans." This is not an Epistle, or letter written by Paul or signed by him. It is an Epistle, or letter, written by a person who signs himself TERTIUS, and sent, as it is said at the end, by a servant woman called Phebe. The last chapter, v. 22, says. "I Tertius, who wrote this Epistle, salute you." Who Tertius or Phebe were, we know nothing of. The Epistle is not dated. The whole of it is written in the first person, and that person is Tertius, not Paul. But it suited the church to ascribe it to Paul. There is nothing in it that is interesting except it be to contending and wrangling sectaries. The stupid metaphor of the potter and the clay is in the 9th chap.

The next book is entittled "The first Epistle of Paul the Apostle, to the Corinthians." This, like the former, is not an Epistle written by Paul, nor signed by him. The conclusion of the Epistle says, "The first epistle to the Corinthians was written from Philippi, by Stephenas and Fortunatus, and Achaicus and Timotheus." The second epistle entitled, "The second epistle of Paul the Apostle, to the Corinthians," is in the same case with the first. The conclusion of it says, "It was written from Philippi, a city of Macedonia, by Titus and Lucas.

A question may arise upon these cases, which is, are these persons the writers of the epistles originally, or are they the writers and attestors of copies sent to the councils who compiled the code or canon of the New Testament? If the epistles had been dated this question could be decided; but in either of the cases the evidences of Paul's hand writing and of their being written by him

* According to the criterion of the church, Paul was not an apostle; that appellation being given only to those called the twelve. Two sailors belonging to a man of war, got into a dispute upon this point, whether Paul was an apostle or not, and they agreed to refer it to the boatswain, who decided very *canonically* that Paul was an *acting* apostle but not *rated*.

is wanting, and, therefore, there is no authority for calling them Epistles of Paul. We know not whose Epistles they were, nor whether they are genuine or forged.

The next is entitled, "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians." It contains six short chapters. But short as the epistle is, it does not carry the appearance of being the work or composition of one person. The fifth chapter, ver. 2, says, "If ye be circumcised Christ shall avail you nothing." It does not say circumcision shall profit you nothing, but Christ shall profit you nothing. Yet in the sixth chap. v. 15, it says, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." These are not reconcileable passages, nor can contrivance make them so. The conclusion of the epistle says, it was written from Rome, but it is not dated, nor is there any signature to it, neither do the compilers of the New Testament say how they came by it. We are in the dark upon all these matters.

The next is entitled, "the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians." Paul is not the writer. The conclusion of it says, "Written from Rome unto the Ephesians by Tychicus."

The next is entitled, "the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians." Paul is not the writer. The conclusion of it says, "It was written to the Philippians from Rome by Epaphroditus." It is not dated. Query, were those men who wrote and signed those Epistles journeymen Apostles, who undertook to write in Paul's name, as Paul is said to have preached in Christ's name!

The next is entitled, "the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians." Paul is not the writer. Doctor Luke is spoken of in this Epistle as sending his compliments. "Luke, the beloved physician and Demas greet you." Chap. iv. v. 14. It does not say a word about his writing any Gospel. The conclusion of the Epistle says, "Written from Rome to the Collossians, by Tychicus and Onesimus."

The next is entitled, "The first and the second Epistles of Paul the Apostle, to the Thessalonians." Either the writer of these Epistles was a visionary enthusiast, or a direct impostor, for he tells the Thessalonians, and, he says, he tells them by the word of the Lord, that the world will be at an end in his and their time; and after telling them that those who are already dead shall rise, he adds, chapter 4, verse 17, "Then we which are alive and

remain shall be caught up with them into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be ever with the Lord." Such detected lies as these, ought to fill priests with confusion, when they preach such books to be the word of God. These two Epistles are said in the conclusion of them, to be written from Athens. They are without date or signatures.

The next four Epistles are private letters. Two of them are to Timothy, one to Titus, and one to Philemon. Who they were, nobody knows.

The first to Timothy, is said to be written from Laodicea. It is without date or signature. The second to Timothy, is said to be written from Rome, and is without date or signature. The Epistle to Titus is said to be written from Nicopolis in Macedonia. It is without date or signature. The Epistle to Philemon is said to be written from Rome by Onesimus. It is without date.

The last Epistle ascribed to Paul is entitled, "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews," and is said in the conclusion to be written from Italy, by Timothy. This Timothy (according to the conclusion of the Epistle called the second Epistle of Paul to Timothy) was bishop of the church of the Ephesians, and consequently this is not an Epistle of Paul.

On what slender cob-web evidence, do the priests and professors of the Christian religion hang their faith! The same degree of hearsay evidence, and that at third and fourth hand, would not, in a court of justice, give a man title to a cottage, and yet the priests of this profession presumptuously promise their deluded followers the kingdom of Heaven. A little reflection would teach men that those books are not to be trusted to; that so far from there being any proof they are the word of God, it is unknown who the writers of them were, or at what time they were written, within three hundred years after the reputed authors are said to have lived. It is not the interest of priests, who get their living by them, to examine into the insufficiency of the evidence upon which those books were received by the popish councils who compiled the New Testament.

The cry of the priests that the church is in danger, is the cry of men who do not understand the interest of their own craft, for instead of exciting alarms and apprehensions for its safety, as they expect, it excites suspicion that the foundation is not sound, and that it is necessary to take down and build it on a surer founda-

tion. Nobody fears for the safety of a mountain, but a hillock of sand may be washed away! Blow then, O ye priests, "the Trumpet in Zion," for the Hillock is in danger.

DETECTOR—P.

COMMUNICATION.

THE church tells us that the books of the Old and New Testament are divine revelation, and without this revelation we could not have true ideas of God.

The Deist, on the contrary, say, that those books *are not* divine revelation, and that were it not for the light of reason, and the religion of Deism, those books, instead of teaching us true ideas of God, would teach us not only false but blasphemous ideas of him.

Deism teaches us that God is a God of truth and justice. Does the Bible teach the same doctrine? It does not.

The Bible says, (Jeremiah, chap. 20, verses 5, 7,) that God is a deceiver. "O Lord (says Jeremiah) thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived. Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed."

Jeremiah not only upbraids God with deceiving *him*, but in chap. 4, verse 9, he upbraids God with deceiving the people of Jerusalem. "Ah! Lord God, (says he,) surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, ye shall have peace, whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul."

In chap. 15, verse 8, the Bible becomes more impudent, and calls God in plain language, a *liar*. "Wilt thou, (says Jeremiah) to God,) be altogether unto me as a liar and as waters that fail."

Ezekiel chap. 14, verse 9, makes God to say—"If the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, *I the Lord hath deceived that prophet.*" All this is downright blasphemy.

The prophet Micaiah, as he is called, 2 Chron. chap. 18, verse 18, tells another blasphemous story of God.—"I saw, says he, the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the hosts of heaven standing on his right hand and on his left. And the Lord said, who shall entice Ahab, king of Israel, to go up and *fall* at Ramoth Gilead? And one spoke after this manner, and another after that manner. Then there came out a spirit (Micaiah does not tell us where he came from) and *stood before the Lord*, (what an impudent fellow this

spirit was,) and said, I will entice him. And the Lord said unto him, wherewith? and he said, I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the Lord said thou shalt entice him, and thou shalt also prevail; go out and do even so.

We often hear of a gang of thieves plotting to rob and murder a man, and laying a plan to entice him out that they may execute their design, and we always feel shocked at the wickedness of such wretches; but what must we think of a book that describes the Almighty acting in the same manner, and laying plans in heaven to entrap and ruin mankind. Our ideas of his justice and goodness forbid us to believe such stories, and, therefore, we say that a lying spirit has been in the mouth of the writers of the books of the Bible. T. P.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE PROSPECT.

In addition to the judicious remarks in your 12th number, on the absurd story of Noah's flood, in the 7th chapter of Genesis, I send you the following:

The 2d verse makes God to say unto Noah, "Of every *clean* beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female, and of every beast that are *not clean*, by two, the male and his female."

Now, there was no such thing as beasts *clean* and *unclean* in the time of Noah. Neither were there any such people as Jews or Israelites at that time, to whom that distinction was a law. The law, called the law of Moses, by which a distinction is made, beasts clean and unclean, was not until several hundred years after the time that Noah is said to have lived. The story, therefore, detects itself, because the inventor forgot himself, by making God make use of an expression that could not be used at the time. The blunder is of the same kind, as if a man in telling a story about America a hundred years ago, should quote an expression from Mr. Jefferson's inaugural speech as if spoken by him at that time.

My opinion of this story is the same as what a man once said to another, who asked him in a drawling tone of voice, "Do you believe the account about No-ah?" The other replied in the same tone of voice, *ah-no*. T. P.

RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE.*

The following publication, which has appeared in several newspapers in different parts of the United States, shows in the most striking manner the character and effects of religious fanaticism, and to what extravagant lengths it will carry its unruly and destructive operations. We give it a place in the Prospect, because we think the perusal of it will be gratifying to our subscribers; and, because, by exposing the true character of such frantic zeal, we hope to produce some influence upon the reason of man, and induce him to rise superior to such dreadful illusions. The judicious remarks at the end of this account were communicated to us by a very intelligent and faithful friend to the cause of Deism.

Extract from a Letter of the Rev. George Scott, of Mill Creek, Washington County, Pennsylvania, to Col. William M'Farran, of Mount Bethel, Northampton County, P. dated November 3, 1802.

My Dear Friend,

We have wonderful times here. God has been pleased to visit this barren corner with abundance of his grace. The work began in a neighbouring congregation, at a sacramental occasion, about the last of September. It did not make its appearance in my congregation till the first Tuesday of October. After society in the night, there appeared an evident stir among the young people, but nothing of the appearance of what appeared afterwards. On Saturday evening following we had society, but it was dull throughout. On Sabbath-day one cried out, but nothing else extraordinary appeared.—That evening I went part of the way to the Raccoon congregation, where the sacrament of the supper was administered;

* It becomes necessary to insert Mr. Scott's letter, for the due understanding of the comments made upon it, by Mr. Paine. It has also in itself much interest, as exhibiting a true picture of the awful condition in which priestcraft has involved human nature, by inculcating "the doctrines of our fallen state by nature, and the way of recovering through Christ." A more childish and besotted dogma, I will venture to say, was never taught in the most barbarous nation that ever existed in the world.—Ed.

but on Monday morning a very strong impression of duty constrained me to return to my congregation in the Flats, where the work was begun. We met in the afternoon at the meeting-house, where we had a warm society. In the evening we removed to a neighbouring house, where we continued in society till midnight; numbers were falling all the time of society.—After the people were dismissed, a considerable number staid and sung hymns, till perhaps two o'clock in the morning, when the work began to the astonishment of all. Only five or six were left able to take care of the rest, to the number perhaps of near forty.—They fell in all directions, on benches, on beds, and on the floor. Next morning the people began to flock in from all quarters. One girl came early in the morning, but did not get within one hundred yards of the house before she fell powerless, and was carried in. We could not leave the house, and, therefore, continued society all that day and all that night, and on Wednesday morning I was obliged to leave a number of them on the spot. On Thursday evening we met again, when the work was amazing; about twenty persons lay to all appearance dead for near two and a half hours, and a great number cried out with sore distress.—Friday I preached at Mill Creek. Here nothing appeared more than an unusual solemnity. That evening we had society, where great numbers were brought under conviction, but none fell. On sabbath-day I preached at Mill Creek. This day and evening was a very solemn time but none fell. On Monday I went to attend presbytery, but returned on Thursday evening to the Flats, where society was appointed, when numbers were struck down. On Saturday evening we had society, and a very solemn time—about a dozen persons lay dead three and a half hours by the watch. On sabbath a number fell, and we were obliged to continue all night in society, as we had done every evening we had met before. On Monday a Mr. Hughes preached at Mill Creek, but nothing extraordinary appeared, only a great deal of falling. We concluded to divide that evening into two societies, in order to accommodate the people. Mr. H. attended the one and I the other. Nothing strange appeared where Mr. H. attended; but where I attended God was present in the most wonderful manner. I believe there was not one present but was more or less affected. A considerable number fell powerless, and two or three, after laying some time, recovered with joy, and spoke near half an hour. One, especially, declared

in a surprising manner the wonderful view she had of the person character, and offices of Christ, with such accuracy of language, that I was astonished to hear it. Surely this must be the work of God! On Thursday evening we had a lively society, but not much falling down. On Saturday we all went to the Cross Roads, and attended a sacrament. Here were, perhaps, about 4000 people collected. The weather was uncomfortable; on the Sabbath-day it rained, and on Monday it snowed. We had thirteen ministers present. The exercises began on Saturday, and continued on night and day with little or no intermission. Great numbers fell; to speak within bounds, there were upwards of 150 down at one time, and some of them continued three or four hours with but little appearance of life. Numbers came to, rejoicing, while others were deeply distressed.—The scene was wonderful; the cries of the distressed, and the agonising groans, gave some faint representation of the awful cries and the bitter screams which will no doubt be extorted from the damned in hell. But what is to me the most surprising, of those who have been subjects among my people with whom I have conversed, but three had any terrors of hell during their exercise. The principal cry is, O how long have I rejected Christ! O how often have I embrued my hands in his precious blood! O how often have I waded through his precious blood by stifling conviction! O this dreadful hard heart! O what a dreadful monster sin is! It was my sin that nailed Jesus to the cross, &c.

The preaching is various; some thunder the terrors of the law —others preach the mild invitation of the gospel. For my part, since the work began, I have confined myself chiefly to the doctrines of our fallen state by nature, and the way of recovery through Christ; opening the way of salvation; showing how God can be just and yet be the justifier of them that believe, and also the nature of true faith and repentance; pointing out the difference between true and false religion, and urging the invitations of the gospel in the most engaging manner that I am master of, without any strokes of terror. The convictions and cries appear to be, perhaps, nearly equal under all these different modes of preaching, but it appears rather most when we preach on the fulness and freeness of salvation.

REMARKS BY MR. PAINE.

In the fifth chapter of Mark, we read a strange story of the Devil getting into the swine after he had been turned out of a man, and as the freaks of the Devil in *that* story and the tumble-down descriptions in *this* are very much alike ; the two stories ought to go together.

" And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs ; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains : because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces ; neither could any *man* tame him. And always night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, and cried with a loud voice, and said, what have I to do with thee, Jesus, *thou* son of the most high God ? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. (For he said unto him, come out of the man, *thou* unclean spirit.) And he asked him, what *is* thy name ? and he answered, saying, my name *is* Legion : for we are many. And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country. Now there was there, nigh unto the mountains, a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought him, saying, send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine ; and the herd ran down a violently steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand,) and were choaked in the sea."

The force of the imagination is capable of producing strange effects.—When animal magnetism began in France, which was while Doctor Franklin was minister to that country, the wonderful accounts given of the wonderful effects it produced on the persons who were under the operation, exceeded any thing related in the foregoing letter from Washington County. They tumbled down, fell into trances, roared and rolled about like persons supposed to be bewitched. The government, in order to ascertain the fact, or detect the imposition, appointed a committee of physicians to in-

quire into the case, and Doctor Franklin was requested to accompany them, which he did.

The committee went to the operator's house, and the persons on whom an operation was to be performed were assembled. They were placed in the position in which they had been when under former operations, and *blind-folded.* In a little time they began to show signs of agitation, and in the space of about two hours they went through all the frantic airs they had shown before; but the case was, that no operation was performing upon them, neither was the operator in the room, for he had been ordered out of it by the physicians; but as the persons did not know this, they supposed him present and operating upon them. It was the effect of imagination only. Doctor Franklin, in relating this account to the writer of this article, said, that he thought the government might as well have let it gone on, for that as imagination sometimes produced disorders it might also cure some. It is fortunate, however, that this falling down and crying out scene did not happen in New England a century ago, for if it had the preachers would have been hung for witchcraft, and in more ancient times the poor falling down folks would have been supposed to be possessed of a devil, like the man in Mark, among the tombs. The progress that reason and Deism make in the world, lessen the force of superstition, and abate the spirit of persecution.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

OF

A SAVOYARD VICAR:

EXTRACTED FROM EMILIUS ; OR, A TREATISE OF EDUCATION,

Br. J. J. ROUSSEAU.

The author introduces the principles and opinions of the Savoyard Vicar with the following preliminary remarks :

I foresee how much my readers will be surprised to find I have attended my pupil throughout the whole first age of life, without once speaking to him of religion. He hardly knows at fifteen years of age whether or not he has a soul, and perhaps it will not be time to inform him of it when he is eighteen ; for, if he learns it too soon, he runs a risk of never knowing it at all.

If I were to design a picture of the most deplorable stupidity, I would draw a pedant teaching children their catechism : and were I resolved to crack the brain of a child, I would oblige him to explain what he said when he repeated his catechism. It may be objected, that the greater part of the dogmas of Christianity being mysterious, to expect the human mind should be capable of conceiving them, is not so much to expect children should be men, but that man should be something more. To this I answer, in the first place, that there are mysteries, which it is not only impossible for man to comprehend, but also to believe ; and I do not see what we get by teaching them to children, unless it be to learn them betimes to tell lies. I will say farther, that before we admit of mysteries, it is necessary for us to comprehend, at least, that they are incomprehensible, and children are not even capable of this. At an age when every thing is mysterious, there are no such things properly speaking, as mysteries.

Believe in God, and thou shalt be saved. This dogma, misunderstood, is the principle of sanguinary persecution, and the cause of all those futile instructions which have given a mortal blow to human reason, by accustoming it to be satisfied with words.

To impose an obligation of believing, supposes the possibility of it. But though a child should profess the Christian religion, what can he believe? He can believe only what he conceives, and he conceives so little of what is said to him, that if you tell him directly the contrary, he adopts the latter dogma as readily as he did the former. The faith of children, and indeed of many grown persons, is merely an affair of geography. Are they to be rewarded in heaven, because they were born at Rome, and not at Mecca? One man is told that Mahomet was a prophet sent by God, and he accordingly says that Mahomet was a prophet sent by God; the other is told that Mahomet was an impostor, and he also in like manner says Mahomet was an impostor. Had these two persons only changed places, each would also have changed his tone, and affirmed what he now denies. Can we infer from two dispositions so much alike, that one will go to heaven, and the other to hell? When a child says he believes in God, it is not in God he believes, but in Peter or James, who tells him there is something which is called God: he believes in the manner of Euripides, when Jupiter was thus addressed in one of his tragedies;*

O Jupiter! Though nothing I know of thee but thy name,———

All the difference that I see here between me and my readers is, that you think children of seven years of age capacitated to believe in God, and I do not think them capable of it even at fifteen. Whether I am right or wrong in this particular, it is not in itself an article of faith, but only a simple observation in natural history.

Let us beware of divulging the truth to those who are incapable of understanding it: for this is the way to substitute error in the room of it. It were better to have no idea of God at all, than to entertain those which are mean, fantastical, injurious, and unworthy a divine object; it is a less crime to be ignorant of, than insult him. I had much rather says the amiable Plutarch, that

* The tragedy of Menalippus, which at first began with this line; but the clamours of the Athenians obliged Euripides afterwards to alter it.—*Plutarch.*

people should believe there is no such person as Plutarch in the world, than that they should say, he is unjust, envious, jealous, and so tyrannical as to require of others what he has not left them power to perform.

The great evil of those preposterous images of the Deity, which we may trace in the minds of children, is, that they remain indelible during their whole life; and that when they are men, they have no better conceptions of God than they had when they were children. Custom and prejudice triumph particularly in matters of religion. But how shall we, who on all occasions pretend to shake off its yoke; we, who pay no regard to the authority of opinion; who would teach our pupil nothing but what he might have learned himself, in any country; in what religion shall we educate Emilius? To what sect shall we unite the man of nature? The answer appears to me very simple; we shall unite him neither to one nor another; but place him in a proper situation, and qualify him to make choice of that which the best use of his reason may induce him to adopt.

Incedo per ignes
*Suppositos cineri doloso.**

No matter; my zeal and sincerity have hitherto stood me in the stead of prudence. I hope these, my securities, will not forsake me in necessity. Fear not, readers, that I shall take any precautions unworthy a friend to truth; I shall never lose sight of my motto; but certainly I may be permitted to distrust my own judgment. Instead of telling you what I think myself, I will give you the sentiments of a man of greater weight than I am. I answer for the veracity of the facts which are here related; they really happened to the author of the paper I am going to transcribe. It is your business to see if any useful reflections may be drawn from it relative to the subject of which it treats. I neither propose the sentiments of myself or another, as a rule for you, but only submit them to your examination.

About thirty years ago, a young man, who had forsaken his own country, and rambled into Italy, found himself reduced to circumstances of great poverty and distress. He had been bred a Calvinist; but, in consequence of his misconduct, and of being unhappily a fugitive in a foreign country, without money or friends, he was induced to change his religion for the sake of subsistence.

* I am treading upon fires hid under deceitful ashes.—Ed.

To this end he procured admittance into an house established for the reception of proselytes. Here, the instructions he received concerning some controversial points, excited doubts he had not before entertained, and brought him first acquainted with the evil of the step he had taken. He was taught strange dogmas, and was eye-witness to stranger manners; and to these he saw himself a destined victim. He now attempted to make his escape, but was prevented and more closely confined; if he complained, he was punished for complaining; and, lying at the mercy of his tyrannical oppressors, found himself treated as a criminal, because he could not without reluctance submit to be so. He had been doubtless entirely ruined, had it not been for the good offices of an honest ecclesiastic, who came to the hospital on some business, and with whom he found an opportunity of a private conference. The good priest was himself poor, and stood in need of every one's assistance; the oppressed proselyte, however, stood yet in greater need of him; the former did not hesitate, therefore, to favour his escape, at the risk of making himself a powerful enemy.

This good priest was naturally humane and compassionate, his own misfortunes had taught him to feel for those of others, nor had prosperity hardened his heart; in a word, the maxims of true wisdom and conscious virtue, had confirmed the goodness of his natural disposition. He cordially embraced the young wanderer, provided him a lodging, and shared with him the slender means of his own subsistence. Nor was this all; he went still farther, giving him both instruction and consolation, in order to teach him that difficult art of supporting adversity with patience. Could you believe, ye sons of prejudice! that a priest, and a priest in Italy too, could be capable of this.

This honest ecclesiastic was a poor Savoyard, who, having in his younger days incurred the displeasure of his bishop, was obliged to pass the mountains, in order to seek that provision which was denied him in his own country. He was neither deficient in literature nor understanding; his talents, therefore, together with an engaging appearance, soon procured him protectors, who recommended him to be tutor to a young man of quality. He preferred poverty, however, to dependence; and, being a stranger to the manners and behaviour of the great, he remained but a short time in that situation. In quitting this service, never-

theless he did not lose the esteem of his patron; and, as he behaved with great prudence, and was universally beloved, he flattered himself he should in time regain the good opinion of his bishop, and obtain some little benefice in the mountains, where he hoped to spend the rest of his days. This was the height of his ambition.

Interested, by a natural propensity, in favour of the young fugitive, he examined very carefully into his character and disposition. In this examination, he saw that his misfortunes had already debased his heart; that the shame and contempt to which he had been exposed, had depressed his courage, and that his disappointed pride, converted into indignation, deduced from the injustice and cruelty of mankind, the depravity of human nature, and the emptiness of virtue. He had observed religion made use of as a mask to self-interest, and its worship as a cloak to hypocrisy. He had seen the terms heaven and hell prostituted in the subtility of vain disputes: the joys of the one and pains of the other being annexed to a mere repetition of words. He had observed the sublime and primitive idea of the divinity disfigured by the fantastical imaginations of men; and finding that, in order to believe in God,* it was necessary to give up that understanding he hath bestowed on us, he held in the same disdain as well the sacred object of our idle reveries, as those reveries themselves. Without knowing any thing of natural causes, or giving himself any trouble to think about them, he had plunged himself into the most stupid ignorance, mixed with the most profound contempt for those who pretended to know more than himself.

But I will continue to speak no longer in the third person, which is indeed a superfluous caution; as you are very sensible, my dear countrymen, that the unhappy fugitive I have been speaking of is myself. I conceive myself far enough removed from the irregularities of my youth to dare to avow them; and think the hand which extricated me from them, too well deserving my gratitude, for me not to do it honour, at the expence of a little shame.

The most striking circumstance of all was to observe, in the retired life of my worthy master, virtue, without hypocrisy, humanity without weakness, his conversation always honest and simple, and his conduct ever conformable to his discourse. I never

* That is, as represented by priestcraft.—Ed.

found him troubling himself whether the persons he assisted went constantly to vespers ; whether they went frequently to confession, or fasted on certain days of the week: nor did I ever know him impose on them any of those conditions, without which a man might perish for want, and have no hopes of relief from the devout.

Encouraged by these observations, so far was I from affecting, in his presence, the forward zeal of a new proselyte, that I took no pains to conceal my thoughts, nor did I ever remark his being scandalized at this freedom. Hence have I sometimes said to myself, He certainly overlooks my indifference for the new mode of worship I have embraced, in consideration of the disregard which he sees I have for that in which I was educated ; as he finds my indifference is not partial to either. As I lived with him in the greatest intimacy, I learned every day to respect him more and more ; and as he had entirely won my heart by so many acts of kindness, I waited with an impatient curiosity, to know the principles on which a life and conduct so singular and uniform could be founded.

It was some time, however, before this curiosity was satisfied. Before he would disclose himself to his disciple, he endeavoured to cultivate those seeds of reason and goodness which he had sown in his mind.

In withdrawing the gaudy veil of external appearances, and presenting to my view the real evils it covered, he taught me to lament the failings of my fellow-creatures, to sympathize with their miseries, and to pity instead of envying them. Moved to compassion for human frailties, from a deep sense of his own, he saw mankind every where the victims either of their own vices or of those of others : he saw the poor groan beneath the yoke of the rich, and the rich beneath that of their own prepossessions and prejudices. Believe me, said he, our mistaken notions of things are so far from concealing our misfortunes from our view, that they augment those evils, by rendering trifles of importance, and making us sensible of a thousand wants, which we should never have known but from our prejudices. Peace of mind consists in a contempt for every thing that may disturb it. The man who gives himself the greatest concern about life, is he who enjoys it least : and he who aspires the most earnestly after happiness is always the most miserable.

Alas! cried I, with all the bitterness of discontent, what a deplorable picture do you present of human life! If we may indulge ourselves in nothing, to what purpose are we born? If we must despise even happiness itself, who is there can know what it is to be happy? I know, replied the good priest, in a tone and manner that struck me. You! said I, so little favoured by fortune! so poor! exiled! persecuted! can you be happy? And if you are, what have you done to purchase happiness? My dear child, returned he, I will very readily tell you. As you have freely confessed to me, I will do the same to you. I will disclose to you, said he, embracing me, all the sentiments of my heart. You shall see me, if not such as I really am, at least such as I think myself to be; and when you have heard my whole profession of faith, you will know why I think myself happy; and, if you think as I do, what you have to do to become so likewise. But this profession is not to be made in a moment: it will require some time to disclose to you my thoughts on the situation of man, and the real value of human life;—we will take a proper opportunity for an hour's uninterrupted conversation on this subject.

As I expressed an earnest desire for such an opportunity, it was put off only to the next morning. It was in summer-time, and we rose at break of day; when, taking me out of town, he led me to the top of a hill, at the foot of which ran the river Po, watering the fertile vales. That immense chain of mountains the Alps, terminated the distant prospect. The rising sun had cast its orient rays over the gilded plains, and, by projecting the long shadows of the trees, the houses, and adjacent hills, described the most beautiful scene ever mortal eye beheld. One might have been tempted to think that nature had at this time displayed all its magnificence, as a subject for our conversation. Here it was, that, after contemplating for a short time the surrounding objects in silence, my guide and benefactor thus began.

Expect not either learned declamations or profound arguments; I am no great philosopher, and I give myself little trouble whether I ever shall be such or not. But I perceive sometimes the glimmering of good-sense, and have always a regard to truth. I will not enter into any disputation, or endeavour to refute you; but only lay down my own sentiments in simplicity of heart: consult your own, during this exposition; this is all I require of you. If I am mistaken, it is undesignedly: which is sufficient to

clear me of all criminal error; and if you are in like manner unwittingly deceived, it is of little consequence: if I am right, reason is common to both; we are equally interested in listening to it: and why should you not think as I do.

I was born a poor peasant, destined by my situation to the business of husbandry; it was thought, however, much more adviseable for me to learn to get my bread by the profession of a priest; and means were found to give me a proper education. In this, most certainly, neither my parents nor I consulted what was really good, true, or useful for me to know; but only that I should learn what was necessary to my ordination. I learned, therefore, what was required of me to learn, I said what was required of me to say, and accordingly was made a priest.* I was not long, however, before I perceived too plainly, that, in laying myself under an obligation to be no longer a man, I had engaged for more than I could possibly perform.

I was in that state of doubt and uncertainty, in which Descartes requires the mind to be involved in order to enable it to investigate truth. This disposition of mind, however, is too disquieting to last long; its duration being owing only to vice or indolence. My heart was not so corrupt as to seek such indulgence; and nothing preserves so well the habit of reflection, as to be more content with ourselves than with our fortune.

I reflected, therefore, on the unhappy lot of mortals, always floating on the ocean of human opinions, without compass or rudder; left to the mercy of their tempestuous passions, with no other guide than an unexperienced pilot ignorant of his course, as well as whence he came and whither he is going. I said often to myself; I love the truth; I seek, yet cannot find it; let any one show it me and I will readily embrace it; Why doth it hide its charms from an heart formed to adore them?

I have frequently experienced at times much greater evils; and yet no part of my life was ever so constantly disagreeable to me as that interval of scruples and anxiety. Running perpetually from one doubt and uncertainty to another, all that I could deduce from any long and painful meditation was incertitude, obscurity

* This is the manner in which all priests, or ministers of the gospel, are made; and when so made, they become in the eyes of their followers, pious, holy men, capable of explaining the whole "*mystery of godliness.*" Ed.

and contradiction; as well with regard to my existence as my duty.

What added further to my perplexity was, that being educated in a church whose authority being universally decisive, admits not of the least doubt; in rejecting one point, I rejected in a manner all the rest; and the impossibility of admitting so many absurd decisions, set me against those which were not so. In being told I must believe all, I was prevented from believing any thing, and I knew not where to stop.

We have no standard with which to measure this immense machine; we cannot calculate its various relations; we neither know the first cause nor the final effects; we are ignorant even of ourselves; we neither know our own nature nor principle of action; nay, we hardly know whether man be a simple or a compound being; impenetrable mysteries surround us on every side; they extend beyond the region of sense: we imagine ourselves possessed of understanding to penetrate them, and we have only imagination. Every one strikes out a way of his own across this imaginary world: but no one knows whether it will lead him to the point he aims at. We are yet desirous to penetrate, to know every thing. The only thing we know not, is to remain ignorant of what it is impossible for us to know. We had much rather determine at random, and believe the thing which is not, than confess that none of us is capable of seeing the thing that is. Being ourselves but a small part of that great whole, whose limits surpass our most extensive views, and concerning which its Creator leaves us to make our idle conjectures, we are vain enough to decide what is that whole in itself, and what we are in relation to it.

Taking a retrospect, then, of the several opinions, which had successively prevailed with me, from my infancy, I found that, although none of them were so evident as to produce immediate conviction, they had nevertheless different degrees of probability, and that my innate sense of truth and falsehood, leaned more or less to each. On this first observation, proceeding to compare, impartially and without prejudice, these different opinions with each other, I found that the first and most common, was also the most simple and most rational; and that it wanted nothing more, to secure universal suffrage, than the circumstance of having been last proposed.

The love of truth, therefore, being all my philosophy, and my method of philosophizing the simple and easy rule of common sense, which dispensed with the vain subtilty of argumentation, I re-examined, by this rule, all the interesting knowledge I was possessed of; resolved to admit, as evident, every thing to which I could not, in the sincerity of my heart, refuse my assent; to admit also, as true, all that appeared to have a necessary connection with the former, and to leave every thing else as uncertain, without rejecting or admitting it, determined not to trouble myself about clearing up any point which did not tend to utility in practice.

But, after all, who am I? What right have I to judge of these things? And what is it that determines my conclusions? If, subject to the impressions I receive, these are formed in direct consequence of those impressions, I trouble myself to no purpose in these investigations. It is necessary, therefore, to examine myself, to know what instruments are made use of in such researches, and how far I may confide in their use.

[The Vicar here goes into a long disquisition upon matter, cause of motion, spirit, freedom of the human will, &c; which is omitted.]

I have done every thing in my power to arrive at truth; but its force is elevated beyond my reach. If my faculties fail me, in what am I culpable? It is necessary for truth to stoop to my capacity.

The good priest spoke with some earnestness: he was moved, and I was also greatly affected. I imagined myself attending to the divine Orpheus, singing his hymns, and teaching mankind the worship of the gods. A number of objections, however, to what he had said suggested themselves; though I did not urge one, because they were less solid than perplexing; and though not convinced, I was nevertheless persuaded he was in the right. In proportion as he spoke to me from the conviction of his own conscience, mine confirmed me in the truth of what he said.

The sentiments you have been delivering, said I to him, appear newer to me in what you profess yourself ignorant of, than in what you profess to believe. I see in the latter nearly that theism, or natural religion, which Christians affect to confound with atheism and impiety, though in fact diametrically opposite. In the present situation of my mind, I find it difficult to adopt precisely your opin-

ion, to be as wise as you ; to be at least, as sincere, however, I will consult my own conscience on these points. Is it not that internal sentiment which, according to your example, ought to be my conductor; and you have yourself taught me, that, after having imposed silence on it for a long time, it is not to be awakened again in a moment.

I will treasure up your discourse in my heart, and meditate thereon. If when I have duly weighed it, I am as much convinced as you, I will trust you as my apostle, and will be your proselyte till death. Go on, however, to instruct me: you have only informed me of half what I ought to know. Give me your thoughts of revelation, the scriptures, and those mysterious doctrines, concerning which I have been in the dark from my infancy, without being able to conceive or believe them, and yet not knowing how either to admit or reject them,

Yes, my dear child said he, I will proceed to tell you what I think farther: I meant not to open to you my heart by halves ; but the desire which you express to be informed in these particulars was necessary to authorize me to be totally without reserve. I have hitherto told you nothing but what I thought might be useful to you, and in the truth of which I am most firmly persuaded. The examination which I am now going to make, is very different; presenting to my view nothing but perplexity, mysteriousness, and obscurity: I enter on it, therefore, with distrust and uncertainty. I almost tremble to determine about any thing; and shall rather inform you, therefore, of my doubts than of my opinions. Were your own sentiments more confirmed, I should hesitate to acquaint you with mine ; but in your present sceptical situation, you would be a gainer by thinking as I do. Let my discourse, however, carry with it no greater authority than of reason ; for I plainly confess myself ignorant, whether I am in the right or wrong. It is difficult indeed, in all discussions, not to assume sometimes an affirmative tone: but remember that all my affirmations, in treating these matters, are only so many rational doubts. I leave you to investigate the truth of them; on my part, I can only promise to be sincere.

You will find my exposition treat of nothing more than natural religion; it is very strange that we should stand in need of any other! By what means can I find out such necessity? In what respect can I be culpable, for serving God agreeably to the dic-

tates of the understanding he hath given me,—and the sentiments he hath implanted in my heart? What purity of morals,—what system of faith useful to man,—or honorable to the Creator, can I deduce from any positive doctrines, that I cannot deduce as well without it, from a good use of my natural faculties? Let any one show me what can be added, either for the glory of God, the good of society, or my own advantage, to the obligations we are laid under by nature; let him show me what virtue can be produced from any new worship, which is not also the consequence of mine. The most sublime ideas of the Deity are inculcated by reason alone. Take a view of the works of nature, listen to the voice within, and then tell me what God hath omitted to say to your sight, your conscience, your understanding? Where are the men who can tell us more of him than he thus tells us of himself? Their revelations only debase the Deity, in ascribing to him human passions. So far from giving us enlightened notions of the supreme Being, their particular tenets, in my opinion, give us the most obscure and confused ideas. To the inconceivable mysteries by which the Deity is hid from our view, they add the most absurd contradictions. They serve to make man proud, persecuting, and cruel: instead of establishing peace on earth, they bring fire and sword. I ask myself to what good purpose tends all this, without being able to resolve the question. Artificial religion presents to my view only the wickedness and miseries of mankind.

I am told, indeed, that revelation is necessary to teach mankind the manner in which God would be served; as a proof of this, they bring the diversity of whimsical modes of worship which prevail in the world; and that without remarking that this very diversity arises from the whim of adopting revelations. Ever since men have taken it into their heads to make the Deity speak, every people make him speak, in their own way, and say what they like best. Had they listened only to what the Deity hath said to their hearts, there would have been but one religion on earth.

It is necessary that the worship of God should be uniform; I would have it so. But is this a point so very important, that the whole apparatus of divine power was necessary to establish it? Let us not confound the ceremonials of religion with religion itself. The worship of God demands that of the heart; and this when it is sincere, is ever uniform.

Men must entertain very ridiculous notions of the Deity, indeed, if they imagine he can interest himself in the gown or cassock of a priest, in the order of words he pronounces, or in the gestures and genuflections he makes at the altar.

I did not set out at first with these reflections. Hurried on by the prejudices of education, and that dangerous self-conceit, which ever elates mankind above their sphere, as I could not raise my feeble conceptions to the supreme Being, I endeavoured to debase him to my ideas. Thus I connected relations infinitely distant from each other, comparing the incomprehensible nature of the Deity with my own. I require still farther a more immediate communication with the Divinity, and more particular instructions concerning his will: not content with reducing God to a similitude with man, I wanted to be farther distinguished by his favour, and to enjoy supernatural lights: I longed for an exclusive and peculiar privilege of adoration, and that God should have revealed to me what he had kept secret from others, or that others should not understand his revelations so well as myself.

Looking on the point at which I was arrived, as that whence all believers set out, in order to reach an enlightened mode of worship, I regarded natural religion only as the elements of all religion. I took a survey of that variety of sects which are scattered over the face of the earth, and who mutually accuse each other of falsehood and error: I asked which of them was in the right? Every one of them in their turns answered *theirs*. I and my partizans only think truly; all the rest are mistaken. *But how do you know that your sect is in the right?* Because God hath declared so. *And who tells you God hath declared so?* My spiritual guide, who knows it well. My pastor tells me to believe so and so, and accordingly I believe it: he assures me that every one who says to the contrary, speaks falsely; and, therefore, I listen to nobody who controverts his doctrine.*

* "All of them," says a good, and learned priest, "do in effect assume to themselves that declaration of the apostle, *not of men, neither by man, nor of any other creature, but of God.*" Gal. i. 1, 12.

"But if we lay aside all flattery and disguise, and speak freely to the point, there will be found very little or nothing at the bottom of all these mighty boastings. For, whatever man may say or think to the contrary, it is manifest that all sorts of religion are handed down and received by human methods.—This seems to be sufficiently plain; first, from the manner of religion's getting ground in the world; and that whether we regard the first general planting of any persuasion, or the method of its gaining now upon private persons. For whence is the daily increase of any sect? Does not the nation to which we belong, the country where we dwell, nay, the town or the family in which we

How, thought I, is not the truth every where the same? Is it possible that what is true with one person can be false with another? If the method taken by him who is in the right, and by him who is in the wrong be the same, what merit or demerit hath the one more than the other? Their choice is the effect of accident, and to impute it to them is unjust: It is to reward or punish them for being born in this or that country. To say that the Deity can judge us this manner, is the highest impeachment of his justice.

Now, either all religions are good and agreeable to God, or if there be one which he dictated to man, and will punish him for rejecting, he hath certainly distinguished it by manifest signs and tokens, as the only true one. These signs are common to all times and places, and are equally obvious to all mankind, to the young and old, the learned and ignorant, to Europeans, Indians, Africans and savages. If there be only one religion in the world that can prevent our suffering eternal damnation, and there be on any part of the earth a single mortal who is sincere and is not convinced by its evidence, the God of that religion must be the most iniquitous and cruel of tyrants. Would we seek the truth, therefore, in sincerity, we must lay no stress on the place and circumstance of our birth, nor on the authority of fathers and teachers; but appeal to the dictates of reason and conscience concerning every thing that is taught us in our youth. It is to no purpose to bid me subject my reason to the truth of things which it is incapacitated to judge; the man who would impose on me a falsehood, may bid me do the same: it is necessary, therefore, I should employ my reason even to know when it ought to submit.

All the theology I am myself capable of acquiring, by taking a prospect of the universe, and by the proper use of my faculties, is

were born, commonly give us our religion; we take that which is the growth of the soil; and whatever we were born in the midst of, and bred up to, that profession we still keep. We are circumcised or baptized, Jews or Christians, or Mahometans, before we can be sensible that we are men; so that religion is not the generality of people's choice, but their fate; not so much their own act and deed, as the act of others for and upon them.—Were religion our own free choice, and the result of our own judgment, the life and manners of men could not be at so vast a distance and manifest disagreement from their principles; nor could they, upon every slight and common occasion, act so directly contrary to the whole tenor and design of their religion.". *Charron of Wisdom, book* ii. *chap.* 5. The English translator observes, that the foregoing passage is taken from Dr. Stanhope's translation of Charron. See the Doctor's excellent note on that passage, vol. 2, page 110.

It is very probable, that the sincere profession of faith of the virtuous theologian of Condom, was not very different from that of the vicar of Savoy.

confined to what I have laid down above. To know more, we must have recourse to extraordinary means. These means cannot depend on the authority of men: for all men being of the same species with myself, whatever another can by natural means come to the knowledge of, I can do the same; and another man is as liable to be deceived as I am: and if I believe, therefore, what he says, it is not because he says it, but because he proves it. The testimony of mankind, therefore, is at the bottom of that of my reason, and adds nothing to the natural means God hath given me for the discovery of the truth.

What then can even the apostle of truth have to tell me, of which I am not still to judge? *But God himself hath spoken: listen to the voice of revelation.* That indeed, is another thing. God hath spoken! This is saying a great deal: but to whom hath he spoken? *He hath spoken to man.* How comes it then that I heard nothing of it? *He hath appointed others to teach you his word.* I understand you: there are certain men who are to tell me what God hath said. I had much rather have heard it from himself; this, had he so pleased, he could easily have done: and I should then have run no risk of deception. Will it be said I am secured from that, by his manifesting the mission of his messengers by miracle? Where are those miracles to be seen? Are they related only in the books? Pray, who wrote these books?—Men.—Who were witnesses to these miracles? Men.—Always human testimony! It is always men that tell me what other men have told them. What a number of these are constantly between me and the Deity! We are always reduced to the necessity of examining, comparing and verifying such evidence. O, that God had deigned to have saved me all this trouble! should I have served him with a less willing heart?

Consider, my friend, in what a terrible discussion I am already engaged; what immense erudition I stand in need of, to recur back to the earliest antiquity; to examine, to weigh, to confront prophecies, revelations, facts, with all the monuments of faith that have made their appearance in all the countries of the world; to ascertain their time, place, authors, and occasions. How great the critical sagacity which is requisite to enable me to distinguish between pieces that are suppositions, and those which are authentic; to compare objections with their replies, translations with their originals; to judge of the impartiality of witnesses, of their

good sense, of their capacity ; to know if nothing be suppressed or added to their testimony, if nothing be changed, transposed or falsified ; to obviate the contradictions that remain, to judge what weight we ought to ascribe to the silence of our opponents, in regard to facts alledged against them ; to discover whether such allegations were known to them ; whether they did not disdain them too much to make any reply ; whether books were common enough for ours to reach them ; or if we were honest enough to let them have a free circulation among us ; and to leave their strongest objections in full force.

Again, supposing all these monuments acknowledged to be incontestible, we must proceed to examine the proofs of the mission of their authors : it would be necessary for us to be perfectly acquainted with the laws of chance, and the doctrine of probabilities, to judge what prediction could not be accomplished without a miracle ; to know the genius of the original languages, in order to distinguish what is predictive in these languages, and what is only figurative. It would be requisite for us to know what facts are agreeable to the established order of nature and what are not so ; to be able to say how far an artful man may not fascinate the eyes of the simple, and even astonish the most enlightened spectators ; to know of what kind a miracle should be, and the authenticity it ought to bear, not only to claim our belief, but to make it criminal to doubt it ; to compare the proofs of false and true miracles, and discover the certain means of distinguishing them ; and after all to tell why the Deity should choose, in order to confirm the truth of his word, to make use of means which themselves require so much confirmation, as if he took delight in playing upon the credulity of mankind, and had purposely avoided the direct means to pursuade them.

Suppose that the divine Majesty had really condescended to make man the organ of promulgating its sacred will ; is it reasonable, is it just, to require all mankind to obey the voice of such a minister, without his making himself known to be such ? Where is the equity or propriety in furnishing him, for universal credentials, with only a few particular tokens displayed before a handful of obscure persons, and of which the rest of mankind know nothing but by hearsay ? In every country in the world, if we should believe all the prodigies to be true which the common people, and the ignorant, affirm to have seen, every sect would be in the right, there

would be more miraculous events than natural ones ; and the greatest miracle of all would be to find that no miracles had happened where fanaticism had been persecuted. The supreme Being is best displayed by the fixed and unalterable order of nature ; if there should happen many exceptions to such general laws, I should no longer know what to think ; and, for my own part, I must confess I believe too much in God to believe so many miracles so little worthy of him.

What if a man should come and harangue us in the following manner : " I come, ye mortals, to announce to you the will of the most high ; acknowledge in my voice that of him who sent me. I command the sun to move backwards, the stars to change their places, the mountains to disappear, the waves to remain fixed on high, and the earth to wear a different aspect." Who would not, at the sight of such miracles, immediately attribute them to the author of nature ? Nature is not obedient to impostors ; their miracles are always performed in the highways, in the fields, or in apartments where they are displayed before a small number of spectators, previously disposed to believe every thing they see. Who is there will venture to determine how many eye witnesses are necessary to render a miracle worthy of credit ? If the miracles intended to prove the truth of your doctrine, stand themselves in need of proof, of what use are they ? There might as well be none performed at all.

The most important examination, after all, remains to be made into the truth of the doctrines delivered ; for as those who say that God is pleased to work these miracles, pretend that the devil sometimes imitates them, we are not a jot nearer than before, though such miracles should be ever so well attested. As the magicians of Pharoah worked the same miracles, even in the presence of Moses, as he himself performed by the express command of God, why might not they, in his absence, from the same proofs, pretend to the same authority ? Thus after proving the truth of the doctrine by the miracle, you are reduced to prove the truth of the miracle by that of the doctrine,* lest the works of the devil should

* This is expressly mentioned in many places in scripture, particularly in Deuteronomy, chap. xiii. where it is said, that, if a prophet, teaching the worship of strange gods, confirm his discourse by signs and wonders, and what he foretells comes really to pass, so far from paying any regard to his mission, the people should stone him to death. When the Pagans, therefore, put the apostles to death, for preaching up to them the worship of a strange God, proving

be mistaken for those of the Lord. What think you of this alternative ?

The doctrines coming from God, ought to bear the sacred characters of the divinity ; and should not only clear up those confused ideas which enlightened reason excites in the mind ; but should also furnish us with a system of religion and morals, agreeable to those attributes by which only we form a conception of his essence. If then they teach us only absurdities, if they inspire us with sentiments of aversion for our fellow creatures, and fear for ourselves ; if they describe the Deity as a vindictive, partial, jealous and angry being ; as a god of war and battles, always ready to thunder and destroy : always threatening slaughter and revenge, and even boasting of punishing the innocent, my heart cannot be incited to love such a Deity, and I shall take care how I give up my natural religion to embrace such doctrines. Your God is not mine, I should say to professors of such a religion. A being, who began his dispensations with partially selecting one people, and proscribing the rest of mankind, is not the common father of the human race ; a being, who destines to eternal punishment the greatest part of his creatures, is not the good and merciful God who is pointed out by my reason.

With regard to articles of faith, my reason tells me, they should be clear, perspicuous, and evident. If natural religion be insufficient, it is owing to the obscurity in which it necessarily leaves those sublime truths it professes to teach : it is the business of revelation to exhibit them to the mind in a more clear and sensible manner ; to adapt them to his understanding, and to enable him to conceive, in order that he may be capable of believing them. True faith is assured and confirmed by the understanding ; the

their divine mission by prophecies and miracles, I see not what could be objected to them, which they might not with equal justice have retorted upon us. Now, what is to be done in this case ? there is but one step to be taken, to recur to reason, and leave miracles to themselves : better indeed had it been never to have had recourse to them, nor to have perplexed good sense with such a number of subtile distinctions. What do I talk of subtile distinctions in Christianity ! if there are such, our Saviour was in the wrong surely to promise the kingdom of heaven to the weak and simple ! how came he to begin his fine discourse on the mount, with blessing the poor in spirit, if it requires so much ingenuity to comprehend and believe his doctrines ? when you prove that I ought to subject my reason to his dictates, it is very well ; but to prove that, you must render them intelligible to my understanding ; you must adapt your arguments to the poverty of my genius, or I shall not acknowledge you to be the true disciple of your master, or think it is his doctrines which you would inculcate.

best of all religions is undoubtedly the clearest: that which is clouded with mysteries and contradictions, the worship that is to be taught by preaching, teaches me by that very circumstance to distrust it. The God whom I adore is not the God of darkness; he hath not given me an understanding to forbid me the use of it. To bid me give up my reason is to insult the author of it. The minister of truth doth not tyrannise over my understanding, he enlightens it.

We have set aside all human authority, and without it I cannot see how one man can convince another, by preaching to him an unreasonable doctrine. Let us suppose two persons engaged in a dispute on this head, and see how they will express themselves in the language generally made use of on such occasions.

Dogmatist.—Your reason tells you that the whole is greater than part; but I tell you, from God, that a part is greater than the whole.

Rationalist.—And who are you, that dare to tell me God contradicts himself? In whom shall I rather believe? in him who instructs me, by means of reason, in the knowledge of eternal truths; or in you who would impose on me, in his name, the greatest absurdity?

D.—In me, for my instructions are more positive; and I will prove to you incontestibly, that he hath sent me.

R.—How! will you prove that God hath sent you to depose against himself? What sort of proofs can you bring to convince me, is it more certain that God speaks by your mouth than by the understanding he hath given me?

D.—The understanding he hath given you! ridiculous and contemptible man! you talk as if you were the first infidel who ever was misled by an understanding depraved by sin.

R.—Nor may you, man of God! be the first knave whose impudence hath been the only proof he could give of his divine mission.

D.—How! can philosophers be thus abusive?

R.—Sometimes, when saints set them the example.

D.—Oh! but I am authorised to abuse you, I speak on the part of God Almighty.

R.—It would not be improper, however, to produce your credentials before you assume your privileges.

D.—My credentials are sufficiently authenticated. Both hea-

ven and earth are witnesses in my favour. Attend, I pray you, to my arguments.

R.—Arguments! why you do not surely pretend to any! to tell me that my reason is fallacious, is to refute whatever it may say in your favour. Whoever refuses to abide by the dictates of reason, ought to be able to convince without making use of it. For supposing that in the course of your arguments you convince me, how shall I know whether it be not through the fallacy of reason, depraved by sin, and I acquiesce in what you affirm? Besides, what proof, what demonstration can you ever employ more evident than the axiom which destroys it? it is full as credible that a just syllogism should be false, as that a part is greater than the whole.

D.—What a difference! my proofs admit of no reply; they are of a supernatural kind.

R.—Supernatural! What is the meaning of that term? I do not understand it.

D.—Contraventions of the order of nature, prophecies, miracles and prodigies of every kind.

R.—Prodigies and miracles! I have never seen any of these things.

D.—No matter; others have seen them for you; we can bring clouds of witnesses—the testimony of whole nations.——

R.—The testimony of what nations! Is this a proof of the supernatural kind?

D.—No. But when it is unanimous, it is incontestible.

R.—There is nothing more incontestible than the dictates of reason; nor can the testimony of all mankind prove the truth of an absurdity. Let us see some of your supernatural proofs then, as the attestation of men is not so.

D.—Infidel wretch! It is plain the grace of God doth not speak to thy understanding.

R.—Whose fault is that? not mine; for according to you, it is necessary to be enlightened by grace to know how to ask for it. Begin then, and speak to me in its stead.

D.—Is not this what I am doing? but you will not hear me: what do you say to prophecies?

R.—As to prophecies; I say, in the first place, I have heard as few of them as I have seen miracles. And in the second, I say that no prophecy bears any weight with me.

D.—Thou disciple of Satan! And why have prophecies no weight with you?

R.—Because, to give them such weight, requires three things; the concurrence of which is impossible. These are, that I should, in the first place, be a witness to the delivery of the prophecy; next, that I should be witness also to the event; lastly, that it should be clearly demonstrated to me that such event could not have followed by accident: for though a prophecy were as precise, clear, and determinate as an axiom of geometry; yet as the perspicuity of a prediction, made at random, does not render the accomplishment of it impossible, that accomplishment, when it happens, proves nothing in fact concerning the foreknowledge of him who predicted it.

You see, therefore, to what your pretended supernatural proofs, your miracles, and your prophecies reduce us;——to the folly of believing them all on the credit of others, and of submitting the authority of God, speaking to our reason, to that of man. If those eternal truths, of which my understanding forms the strongest conceptions, can possibly be false, I can have no hope of ever arriving at certitude; and so far from being capable of being assured that you speak to me from God, I cannot even be assured of his existence.

You see my child, how many difficulties must be removed before our disputants can agree; nor are these all. Among so many different religions, each of which prescribes and excludes the other, one only must be true, if indeed there be such a one among them all. Now, to discover which this is, it is not enough to examine that one; it is necessary to examine them all, as we should not, on any occasion whatever, condemn without a hearing.* It is necessary to compare objections with proofs, and to know what each objects to in the rest, as well as what the others have to offer in their defence. The more clearly any sentiment or opinion appears demonstrated, the more narrowly it behoves us to enquire, what are the reasons which prevent its opponents from subscribing to it. We must be very simple, indeed, to

* Plutarch relates that the stoics, among other idle paradoxes, maintained that in case of contradictory opinions, it was useless to hear the arguments of both parties; for, say they, either the first writer has proved his proposition, or he has not. If he has proved it, all is said that is required, and the adverse party ought to be condemned; if he has not proved it, he is in the wrong, and ought to be rejected.—This is the way of religionists in general, they will hear but one side of a question.

think an attention to the theologists of our own party sufficient to instruct us in what our adversaries have to offer. Where shall we find divines, of any persuasion, perfectly candid and honest? Do they not all begin to weaken the arguments of their opponents, before they proceed to refute them? Each is the oracle of his party, and makes a great figure among his partizans, with such proofs as would expose him to ridicule among those of a different persuasion. Are you desirous of gaining information from books? What a fund of erudition will not this require! How many languages must you learn! How many libraries must you turn over! And who is to direct you in the choice of the books? There are hardly to be found in any one country, the best books; on the contrary side of the question, and still less is it to be expected we should find books on all sides. The writings of the adverse and absent party, where they even found, would be very easily refuted. The absent are always in the wrong; and the most weak and insufficient arguments, laid down with a confident assurance, easily efface the most sensible and valid, when exposed with contempt. Add to all this, that nothing is more fallacious than books, nor exhibit less faithfully the sentiments of their writers. The judgment which you formed, for instance, of the Roman Catholic religion, from the treatise of Bossuet, was very different from that which you acquired by residing among us. You have seen that the doctrines we maintain in our controversies with the protestants, are not those which are taught the common people, and that Bossuet's book by no means resembles the instructions delivered from the pulpit. To form a proper judgment of any religion, we are not to deduce its tenets from the books of its professors; we must go and learn it among the people. Each sect have their peculiar traditions, their customs, and modes of acceptation, which constitute the peculiar mode of their faith; all which should be taken into consideration when we form a judgment of their religion.

How many considerable nations are there, who print no books of their own, and read none of ours! How are they to judge of our opinions, or we of theirs? We laugh at them, they despise us; and though our travellers have turned them into ridicule, they need only to travel among us, to ridicule us in their turn. In what country, are there not to be found men of sense and sincerity, friends of truth, who require only to know in order to embrace it?

And yet every one imagines truth confined to his own particular system, and thinks the religion of all other nations in the world absurd; these foreign modes, therefore, cannot be in reality so very absurd as they appear, or the apparent reasonableness of ours is less real.

We have three principal religions in Europe. One admits only of one revelation, another of two, and the third of three. Each holds the other in detestation, anathematizes its professors, accuses them of ignorance, obstinacy and falsehood. What impartial person will presume to decide between them, without having first examined their proofs and heard their reasons? That which admits only of one revelation is the most ancient, and seems the least disputable; that which admits of three is the most modern, and seems to be the most consistent; that which admits of two, and rejects the third, may possibly be the best; but it has certainly every prepossession against it: its inconsistency stares one full in the face.

In all these three revelations, the sacred books are written in languages unknown to the people who believe in them. The Jews no longer understand Hebrew; the Christians neither Greek nor Hebrew; the Turks and Persians understand no Arabic; and even the modern Arabs themselves speak not the language of Mahomet. Is not this a very simple manner of instructing mankind, by talking to them always in a language which they do not comprehend? But these books, it will be said, are translated; a mighty pretty answer! Who can assure me they are translated faithfully, or that it is even possible they should be so? Who can give me a sufficient reason why God, when he hath a mind to speak to mankind, should stand in need of an interpreter?

I can never conceive, that what every man is indispensably obliged to know, can be shut up in these books: or that he who is incapacitated to understand them, or the persons who explain them, will be punished for involuntary ignorance. But we are always plaguing ourselves with books. What a frenzy! Because Europe is full of books, the Europeans conceive them to be indispensable, without reflecting that three fourths of the world knew nothing at all about them. Are not all books written by men? How greatly, therefore, must man have stood in need of them, to instruct him in his duty; and by what means did he come to the knowledge of such duties, before books were written? Either he

must have accquired such knowledge himself, or it must have been totally dispensed with.

We Roman Catholics, make a great noise about the authority of the church: but what do we gain by it, if it requires as many proofs to establish this authority as other sects require immediately to establish their doctrines? The church determines that the church hath a right to determine. Is not this a special proof of its authority? And yet depart from this, and we enter into endless discussions.

Do you know many Christians, who have taken the pains to examine carefully into what the Jews have alledged against us? If there are a few who know something of them, it is from what they have met with in the writings of Christians: a very pretty manner truly of instructing themselves in the arguments of their opponents! But what can be done? If any one should dare to publish among us such books as openly espouse the cause of Judaism, we should punish the author, the editor, and the bookseller.* This policy is very convenient, and very sure to make us always in the right. We can refute at pleasure those who are afraid to speak.

Those among us, also, who have an opportunity to converse with the Jews, have but little advantage. These unhappy people know they lie at our mercy; the tyranny we exercise over them, renders them justly timid and reserved? they know how far cruelty and injustice are compatible with Christian charity: what, therefore, can they venture to say to us, without running the risk of incurring the charge of blasphemy? Avarice inspires us with zeal and they are too rich not to be ever in the wrong.

The most sensible and learned among them are the most circumspect and reserved. We make a convert, perhaps, of some wretched hireling, to calumniate his sect; set a parcel of pitiful brokers disputing, who give up the point merely to gratify us; but while we triumph over the ignorance or meanness of such wretched opponents, the learned among them smile in contemptuous silence at our folly.

* Among a thousand known instances, the following stands in no need of comment. The Catholic divines of the sixteenth century having condemned all the Jewish books, without exception, to be burned, a learned and illustrious theologue, who was consulted on that occasion, had very nigh involved himself in ruin, by being simply of opinion that such of them might be preserved as did not relate to Christianity, or treated of matters foreign to religion.

But do you think that in places where they might write and speak securely, we should have so much the advantage of them? Among the doctors of the Sorbonne, it is as clear as day-light, that the predictions concerning the Messiah relate to Jesus Christ. Among the Rabbins at Amsterdam, it is just as evident they have no relation to him. I shall never believe that I have acquired a sufficient acquaintance with the arguments of the Jews, till they compose a free and independent state, and have their schools and universities, where they may talk and discourse with freedom and impunity. Till then, we can never truly know what they have to say.

At Constantinople, the Turks make known their reasons, and we durst not publish ours: there it is our turn to submit. If the Turks require of us to pay to Mahomet, in whom we do not believe, the same respect which we require the Jews to pay to Jesus Christ, in whom they believe as little; can the Turks be in the wrong, and we in the right? On what principles of equity can we resolve that question, in our own favour?

Two thirds of mankind are neither Jews, Mahometans, nor Christians; how many millions of men, therefore, must there be who never heard of Moses, of Jesus Christ, or of Mahomet! Will this be denied? Will it be said that our missionaries are dispersed over the face of the whole earth? This indeed is easily affirmed; but are there any of them in the interior of Africa, where no European hath ever yet penetrated? Do they travel through the inland parts of Tartary, or follow on horseback the wandering hordes, whom no stranger ever approaches, and who, so far from having heard of the Pope, hardly know any thing of their own Grand Lama? Do our missionaries traverse the immense continent of America, where there are whole nations still ignorant that the people of another world have set foot on theirs? Are there any of them in Japan, from whence their ill behaviour hath banished them for ever, and where the fame of their predecessors are transmitted to succeeding generations, as that of artful knaves, who, under cover of a religious zeal, wanted to make themselves imperceptibly masters of the empire? Do they penetrate into the harams of the Asiatic princes, to preach the gospel to millions of wretched slaves? What will become of the women in that part of the world, for want of a missionary to preach the gospel to them? Must every one of them go to hell for being a recluse?

But were it true that the gospel is preached in every part of the earth, the difficulty is not removed. On the eve preceding the arrival of the first missionary in any country, some one person of that country expired without hearing the glad tidings. Now, what must we do with this one person? Is there but a single individual in the whole universe, to whom the gospel of Christ is not made known, the objection which presents itself, on account of this one person, is as cogent as if it included a fourth part of the human race.

Again, suppose the ministers of the gospel actually present and preaching in those distant nations, how can they reasonably expect to be believed on their own word, and that their hearers will not scrupulously require a confirmation of what they teach? Might not any one of the latter very reasonably say to them, "You tell me of a God who was born and put to death near two thousand years ago, at the other end of the world, and in I know not what obscure town; assuring me that all those who do not believe in this mysterious tale are damned. These are things too strange to be credited on the sole authority of a man, who is himself a perfect stranger."

Why hath your God brought those events to pass, of which he requires me to be instructed, at so great a distance? It is a crime to be ignorant of what passes at the Antipodes? Is it possible for me to divine that there existed, in the other hemisphere, the people of the Jews, and the city of Jerusalem? I might as well be required to know what happened in the moon. You are come, you say, to inform me; but why did you not come time enough to inform my father? Or why do you damn that good old man, because he knew nothing of the matter? Must he be eternally punished for your delay? he who was so just, so benevolent, and so desirous of knowing the truth! Be honest, and suppose yourself in my place. Do you think, upon your testimony alone, that I can believe all these incredible things you tell me? or reconcile so much injustice with the character of that just God, whom you pretend to make known? Let me first, I pray you, go and see this distant country, where so many miracles have happened, totally unknown here. Let me go and be well informed why the inhabitants of that Jerusalem presumed to treat God like a thief or a murderer?

They did not, you will say, acknowledge his divinity. How then can I, who never have heard of him, but from you? You add, that they were punished, dispersed, and led into captivity; not one of them ever approaching their former city. Assuredly they deserved all this: but its present inhabitants, what say they of the unbelief and deicide of their predecessors? They deny it, and acknowledge the divinity of the sacred personage just as little as did its ancient inhabitants.

What! in the same city in which your God was put to death, neither the ancient nor present inhabitants acknowledge his divinity! And yet you would have me believe it, who was born near two thousand years after the fact, and two thousand leagues distant from the place! Don't you see that, before I can give credit to this book, which you call sacred, and of which I comprehend nothing, I ought to be informed from others, when and by whom it was written, how it hath been preserved and transmitted to you, what is said of it in the country, what are the reasons of those who reject it, though they know as well as you every thing of which you have informed me? You must perceive the necessity I am under, of going first to Europe, to Asia, and unto Palestine, to examine into things myself; and that I must be an idiot to listen to you before I have done this.

Such a discourse as this appears to me not only very reasonable, but I affirm that every sensible man ought, in such circumstances, to speak in the same manner, and to send a missionary about his business, who should be in haste to instruct and baptise him before he had sincerely verified the proofs of his mission. Now, I maintain that there is no revelation against which the same objections might not be made, and that with greater force, than against Christianity. Hence it follows, that if there be in the world but one true religion, and every man be obliged to adopt it, under pain of damnation, it is necessary to spend our lives in the study of all religions, to visit the countries where they have been established, and examine and compare them with each other. No man is exempted from the principle duty of his species, and no one hath a right to confide in the judgment of another. The artisan, who lives only by his industry, the husbandman, who cannot read, the timid and delicate virgin, the feeble valetudinarian, all without exception, must study, meditate, dispute, and travel the world over, in search of truth. There would be no longer any

settled inhabitants in a country, the face of the earth being covered by pilgrims, going from place to place, at great trouble and expence, to verify, examine and compare the several different systems and modes of worship to be met with in various countries. We must, in such a case, bid adieu to arts and sciences, to trade, and all the civil occupations of life. Every other study must give place to that of religion; while the man who should enjoy the greatest share of health and strength, and make the best use of his time and his reason, for the greatest term of years allotted to human life, would, in the extreme of old age, be still perplexed where to fix: and it would be a great thing, after all, if he should learn before his death what religion he ought to have believed and practised during life.

Do you endeavour to mitigate the severity of this method, and place as little confidence as possible in the authority of men? In so doing you place the greatest confidence: for if the son of a Christian does right, in adopting, without a scrupulous and impartial examination, the religion of his father, how can the son of a Turk do wrong, in adopting in the same manner, the religion of Mahomet? I defy all the persecutors in the world to answer this question in a manner satisfactory to any person of common sense. Nay, some of them, when hard pressed by such arguments, will sooner admit that God is unjust, and visits the sins of the fathers on the children, than give up their cruel and persecuting principles. Others, indeed, elude the force of these reasons, by civilly sending an angel to instruct those, who, under invincible ignorance, live, nevertheless, good moral lives. A very pretty device, truly, that of the angel! not contented with subjecting us to their machinery, they would reduce the Deity himself to the necessity of employing it.

See, my son, to what absurdities we are led by pride, and the spirit of persecution, by being puffed up by our own capacity, and conceiving that we possess a greater share of reason than the rest of mankind. I call to witness that God of peace whom I adore, and whom I would make known to you, that my researches have been always sincere: but seeing that they were, and always must be, unsuccessful, and that I was launched out into a boundless ocean of perplexity, I returned the way I came, and confined my creed within the limits of my first notions. I could never believe that God required me, under pain of damnation, to be so very

learned. I, therefore, shut up all my books: that of nature lies open to every eye. It is from this sublime and wonderful volume that I learn to serve and adore its divine Author. No person is excusable for neglecting to read in this book, as it is written in an universal language, intelligible to all mankind. Had I been born in a desart island, or never seen a human creature beside myself; had I never been informed of what had formerly happened in a certain corner of the world; I might yet have learned by the exercise and cultivation of my reason, and by the proper use of those faculties God hath given me, to know and love him; I might hence have learned to love and admire his power and goodness, and to have discharged my duty here on earth.

Such is the involuntary scepticism in which I remain: this scepticism, however, is not painful to me, because it extends not to any essential point of practice; and as my mind is firmly settled regarding the principles of my duty, I serve God in the sincerity of my heart. In the mean time, I seek not to know any thing more than what relates to my moral conduct; and as to those dogmas, which have no influence over the behaviour, and which many persons give themselves so much trouble about, I am not at all solicitous concerning them.

Thus, my young friend, have I given you with my own lips a recital of my creed, such as the supreme Being reads it in my heart. You are the first person to whom I have made this profession: you are also the only one, perhaps, to whom I shall ever make it.

You are now arrived at the critical term of life, in which the mind opens itself to conviction, in which the heart receives the form and character which it bears during life, whether good or ill. Its substance grows afterwards hard, and receives no new impressions. Now is the time, therefore, to impress on your mind the seal of truth. If I were more positive in myself, I should have assumed a more decisive and dogmatical air; but, what can I do more? I have opened to you my heart, without reserve: what I have thought certain, I have given you as such; my doubts I have declared as doubts, my opinions as opinions; and have given you my reasons for both. It remains, now, for you to judge; you have taken time; this precaution is wise, and makes me think well of you. Begin by bringing your conscience to a state desirous of being enlightened. Be sincere with yourself. Adopt those of my sentiments which you are persuaded are true, and

reject the rest. You are not yet so much depraved by vice to run the risk of making a bad choice. I should propose to confer together sometimes on these subjects; but as soon as ever we enter into disputes we grow warm; obstinacy and vanity interfere, and sincerity is banished. For my own part, it was not till after several years of meditation that my sentiments became fixed; these, however, I still retain, my conscience is easy, and I am content. Were I desirous to begin a new examination into the truth of these sentiments, I could not do it with a more sincere love to truth: and my mind at present less active, would be less in a state to discover it. I purpose, therefore, to remain as I am, lest my taste for contemplation should become insensibly an idle passion; lest it should make me indifferent to the discharge of my practical duties. Above half my life is already spent, the remainder will not afford me time more than sufficient to repair my errors by my virtues. If I am mistaken, it is not wilfully. That Being, who searches the hearts of men, knows that I am not fond of ignorance. But under my present incapacity to instruct myself better, the only method that remains for me to extricate myself, is a good life.

A LETTER OF ROUSSEAU TO HIS BOOKSELLER AT THE HAGUE.

Sir,—I am very sorry for that embarrassment which you tell me you lie under, on account of the Savoyard's Creed, inserted in my Emilius; but I declare to you again, once for all, that no threats, no violence, shall ever prevail on me to suppress a syllable of what I have written. As you did not think it necessary to consult me with regard to the contents of my manuscript, when you treated for the copy, you have no right to make application to me now, on account of the obstacles you may meet with to its publication: especially as to the bold truths scattered up and down in my other works, might very naturally suggest to you, that this was by no means exempt from the like. I am astonished you should ever conceive that a man, who takes so many precautions that his works may not be altered after his decease, would permit them to be mutilated during his life-time.

With respect to the several reasons you have urged, you might have spared yourself that trouble, by supposing that I had myself reflected on what is proper to be done. You tell me that I am censured by people of my own way of thinking. But, this cannot possibly be ; for I who certainly am of my own way of thinking, approve what I have done ; nor is there any action of my whole life with which my heart is more perfectly satisfied. In ascribing glory to God, and endeavouring to promote the good of mankind, I have done my duty ; whether they profit by it or not. I would not give a straw to convert their censure to applause. As for the rest, to take things in the worst light, what can the world do to me more than the infirmities of my nature will very speedily do of themselves ? The public can neither confer nor deprive me of my reward ; this depends not on any human power. You see, therefore, that my measures are taken let what will happen ; for which reason, I would advise you to press me no farther on the subject ; as every thing you can possibly advance will be absolutely to no purpose.

RELIGIOUS DOGMAS;

THEIR ORIGIN AND CONSEQUENCES.

This Article first appeared in "The Prospect." It was written by a Mr. Taylor, an Englishman, a particular friend of Elihu Palmer, editor of that work.

Religion, in its most common acceptation, is a complex idea compounded of three things totally distinct from each other; the first I shall mention is the observance of certain rights and ceremonies, such as circumcision—baptism—fasting on particular days—feasting on others—abstaining from pleasures, and many other external symbols which have, by some, been considered as the sum total of religion. 2dly. There is included in the idea of religion, an assent to certain metaphysical propositions, such as the nature and properties of the supreme intelligence, the extent of his interference in the affairs of this world, and the nature and essence of the human soul. 3dly. The word religion has also included in it an approbation of some systems of morality, supposed to be deduced as a necessary inference from the articles of belief. Hence it has been said, morality itself, or the knowledge and practice of duties alone, is not religion, without it be accompanied with the observance of certain rites, and the belief in a metaphysical creed. Neither is the observance of the established ceremonies to be considered as acts of religion, unless the prescribed duties be also fulfilled; but above all things the mind must give its assent to the metaphysical creed. Finally, this metaphysical creed, which in every case is so essentially necessary, is not of itself religion. Ceremonies must be observed, and that kind

of morality, deduceable from an absurd creed, must be adhered to, as far as the weakness of our supposed fallen nature will allow.

Nothing could have supported extravagant rights and ceremonies, or chained men's minds down to absurd creeds if these had not been artfully interwoven with a plausible system of morality; nor would men have submitted to call that good which is in its nature evil, or that evil, which is naturally good, if the mind had not been prepossessed with a false creed.

It is, therefore, my intention to inquire how this association of three ideas totally distinct came to take place and assume the name of religion—what connexion they have in nature—whether they may not be separated without injury to morality; and, finally, having thus stripped morality of the load with which it has been incumbered, we shall then see what ought to be the idea or definition of true religion.

As it would take up too much time to examine the whole of these propositions, we shall content ourselves with an investigation of the probable origin of rights, ceremonies, and creeds. In all ages mankind have believed in the existence of celestial beings, who have been supposed to direct the affairs of this lower world, and have been anxious to know their will, and as far back as the history of man has been preserved, the practice was to have recourse to oracles; and, frequently, it is said, anticipating the wishes of man, communicated their will in dreams or visions: but as oracles and dreams were always ambiguous, a class of men sprung up, who, taking advantage of the passions of the ignorant, pretended to a superior skill in the interpretation of these imaginary enigmas: this was found to be so profitable an employment, that its professors, desirous of converting it into a trade, wherein many hands might be employed, under the direction, and for the emolument of one chief; taught their pupils that certain appearances in nature, denoted certain purposes of the gods; hence the management of the Urim and Thummim among the Jews, which answers to the purpose of reading cards or cups, by old women of the present day: of the same kind also, were predictions from the appearance of the entrails of sacrificed animals, and the manner of the flight of birds. This was the origin of the priesthood and of priestcraft. Afterwards the followers of the craft, while they were deceiving the world by lies, were themselves

deceived, believing, as they did, implicitly in the correspondences taught or transmitted to them from the first deceivers.

As the whole invention of converting lying into a trade was only that its followers might live in splendid idleness; and as money was not then a representative for wealth, sacrifices and offerings were invented: the first to satisfy the hunger of the priests, the second to procure them the gratification of their passions: and as in those days the people were accustomed to barter, and to gave one substantial object for another, it was necessary to give them some plausible reason that might satisfy the minds of the people, as to the strange absurdity and injustice of taking a bullock, or a ram of the best of their flocks for that which cost nothing, they were therefore told, that these sacrfices and offerings were pleasing and acceptable to the gods, and that for these small donations, or rather bribes, the heavenly powers would be propitious, and change their absolute decrees.

This period of deception may be called the age of oracles, and it lasted as long as the priests were moderate in their demands; while they preserved some show of decency in their manners, and while the characters and actions of their gods were such as indicate a divine origin; but when the priests became too rapacious and greedy, and when their morals and the morals ascribed to their gods grew to be so dissolute and abandoned that they had more the appearance of demons and tyrants, than of gods, and men desirous of the happiness of the human race, then this superstition, after combating with reason for several centuries, was obliged to give place to another equally absurd and wicked, but which in its commencement gained the approbation of the people by the purity of the lives of the first promulgators: this is the doctrine of discovering the will of gods from books of scripture. Oracles or dreams were then said to be abandoned as improper means of communicating the will of gods to men.

Demons, it is said, had taken advantage of those means and had egregiously deceived the people, insomuch, that the will of demons or evil spirits were generally substituted for that of the true God. A doctrine which gained an easy belief from the people of those times, as the will of the gods expressed by the oracles tended more frequently to the destruction than preservation of mankind. It was said, also, that to prevent the interference of devils or false (lying) gods, the only true God had written or caused to

be written in some ancient manuscript books, some of them in the language of Paradise which was almost forgotten, and hardly understood, and others in the prevailing language of that time, which was the Greek; that they ordered these books to be collected and preserved for the instruction of men in all ages and in every nation; and he promises, that this shall be his unalterable will and last testament; that he will no longer confuse or perplex the people of the earth with new regulations and laws; and finally, that he would, to the end of time, continue a succession of priests whose trade it should be to interpret those books, and reconcile their contradictions, for which they are to receive money, and thereby put an end to sacrifices.

It is evident that the inventors of this doctrine had the same end in view, with those others who invented correspondences and the interpretation of dreams: namely, to form it into a trade or craft for the mutual benefit of the concerned: though some good people have been surprised that there ever should exist such villany as to impose upon mankind by falsifying the divine being, and making God as it were accessary to their crimes. To which it may be answered, that this species of villany proceeds from a most accursed principle, which never was more prevalent than now, namely, "That such is the perverse nature of man, so prone is he to do evil that it is necessary to deceive him in order that he may be persuaded to pursue his own good." Let a man's mind be possessed of this principle, and add to it talents and opportunity, and he will not hesitate to raise his fortune and power by taking sacrilegious liberties with the character of the Supreme Intelligence.

Having got possession of some of those books, and having reserved to themselves the interpretation of them, they began to teach the world doctrines suited to their own views and interest, all of which will be examined in due time, by the eye of reason and the standard of nature. It was unfortunate for mankind that there should be so many books (written in different centuries, and by men of contrary sentiments) exhibited to the world as the will of God, and holding out, as these books do, the character of the Deity in so many different points of view; sometimes as a sanguinary tyrant, who cannot be satisfied but by blood and sacrifices, and every species of absurd formality;—at other times as a kind, beneficent being, who held sacrifices, new moons, and the most

solemn meetings as an abomination;—at one time declaring himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and afterwards professing to be the God of the whole earth. In one book issuing a decree that the children shall bear the sins of their fathers even to the third and fourth generation, and in another repealing that law when it became disagreeable to the people, and they had made use of a taunting proverb concerning it, viz. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge by it." Jer. 21, 29. These contradictions could not fail to cause dispute, but they have done more, they have been the cause of bloody and destructive wars, which have not only disgraced religion, but human nature, and put back the age of reason for many centuries. This was an accident, however, that was unavoidable, for the Jews had from a national pride, and by universal consent, consecrated all their ancient books that were saved after their return from Babylon, and the first Christians, however willing they might be, had not sufficient authority to bring in question the fact of their inspiration.

Towards the end of the age of oracles, and the commencement of the age we are now speaking of, which may be termed the age of scripture belief, every thing written in the ancient Hebrew tongue, was sought after with wonderful avidity. It was a mania that possessed the world at that time, as antique medals and pictures have done at other periods; they sought for them as for hidden treasure, and every fragment that could be rescued from obscurity and the teeth of time, was considered of inestimable value. It was the same with any Greek epistle or fragment that in the slightest manner mentioned the name of Jesus Christ or his disciples. This mania lasted for several centuries, during which time the scriptures, or manuscripts which they called the word of God, were growing in the bulk and matter for disputation. Forgeries of epistles and gospels in Greek, were numerous; those in Hebrew were fewer, because not many understood that language; beside there were more scripture already in the Hebrew, than suited the doctrines which the first Christians were anxious to establish. For a long time, therefore, it was the wish of many that several of the Hebrew books were out of the sacred catalogue, it was found so difficult to make them bend to the new opinions.

When the age of scripture belief was in its full; and the people as ignorant as could be wished by designing men, a council was called who took upon them to determine upon the validity of the last will and testament of Almighty God. By this council several of the books were deprived of their sacred character; but whether the true or the forged is uncertain.

From that period the teachers and the taught have been equally deceiving and deceived; we do not, therefore, charge any Christians of the present day with preaching a false doctrine on purpose to deceive; but we say of them as Charles V., Emperor of Germany, said of Luther and Calvin—they are seduced by their own opinions, and that their own interest, coupled with that most abominable of all principles mentioned above, namely, that men must be deceived for their own good, causes them to despise the dictates of reason, and assist in perpetuating the deception.

The age of scripture belief has been the most dreadful æra, and the most calamitous to the human race that history has recorded. In one war, the crusades, which was about a rotten piece of wood, the cross of Christ, there was more money spent, blood shed, cruelties committed, than in any war either before or since. At the taking of Jerusalem 20,000 Turks were slain, and notwithstanding a proclamation of pardon, the Christians put to death all the Turks found in the city without regard to age or sex, with the same *zeal*, as the authors of those days call it, wherewith Saul slew the Gibeonites.

It is not my intention at this time to enumerate the evils that this system has occasioned. Experience has sufficiently shown how miserable man has been during the whole age of scripture belief, and that the system itself is giving way very fast to the light of reason, which alone can give man an adequate idea of an intelligent first cause and of the means which he has provided for our improvement and happiness.

It is only my intention to show that the true God can only be known by the investigation of reason contemplating the mighty fabric of the universe, and perceiving throughout the whole a unity of design and a wonderful contrivance. This is the first perception or glimpse of the Deity; the actions upon which all our future reasonings must be founded, and from which all the knowledge we can attain of him or of his ways with man is drawn. By beginning at the source we shall see nothing in the Supreme Intel-

ligence but immense goodness and power, no partialities, no injustice or eternal punishment for crimes of a moment, or for acting in obedience to the unalterable laws of nature.—Led by the light of reason man will perform his duty as a son under the eye of a kind parent; he will perform his duty because he sees it to be the road to self-satisfaction, and that he is acting a part in a great work, which he is desirous of seeing accomplished. He considers himself as belonging to the great family of mankind, and is assured that his own happiness cannot be complete without a regard to the happiness of the whole family. In his opinion, heaven itself could not be the seat of happiness, if such a place as hell has an existence in the universe. But he who has no other check to his vicious propensities but a fear of hell-fire, thinks that were that obstacle removed, man would riot in vice and in the gratification of every lust, little does he think that virtue may be loved and followed with as much ardour, if not more, than vice, when we have a good opinion of the justice and goodness of God. But how is it possible men should be virtuous when the God they pretend to worship is represented as a tyrant, and unjust, whose forgiveness for an ill spent life may be obtained by the most ridiculous ceremonies or foolish credulity.

We have, therefore, undertaken to expose and set in its true light the character of the God of the Hebrews as it is represented in the first books of the Bible, to show that he was not the true God, but an imaginary being conjured up to serve the political purposes of Moses—to show also that men who believe in such a God cannot be virtuous, or good citizens, or believe in the *true* God; and this is the only reason why so much iniquity abounds.

Although the three æras that I have noticed are remarkable in the history of human mind, yet it must not be understood that I think the principles of the Age of Reason have never made their appearance; because I place that æra as following the other two, or that there are no other æras—no—the case is, that although there never has been an æra which could be justly denominated the Age of Reason, yet its principles have been recognised in all ages, and in every country were there have been men who had courage to divest themselves of the prevailing prejudices, and use the faculties of their own minds to discover truth; and several of the authors of the Bible were certainly men of this description; such were the authors of the book of Job; of some of the Psalms

and several chapters of Isaiah, (for both these books appear to be a collection,) and also the prophet Malachi and Jesus the son of Sirach, (apocryphal,) and finally Jesus Christ himself and the authors of the Apostles and Jude—all these were men evidently exercising their own reason on the works of God, in regard to which men will in all ages, and in every country without communication with each other, have nearly the same sentiments, and be prompted by reflection to the same duties.—Universal good will and peace to man.

We now proceed to examine the character of the God of the Hebrews.

It is to be presumed that the first authentic history of the Jews commences with Abraham, and that *some* of the anecdotes recorded of *him* may be true, but prior to that period all is fiction; founded either upon ancient tradition, or the dreams of philosophers, respecting the creation, and an universal deluge, which, by inspecting the surface of this globe appears an event, in some degree probable to have happened; so that although we go back to the period which we consider altogether fiction, to trace the character of the God, it suits our purpose well enough; for the whole being only to show what ideas those writers had of their God, (which is seen as well in fiction as in true history,) and, consequently, that the books of Moses, as they represent a God, changeful in his purposes: given to caprice and anger; sometimes condemning his own institutions; confounding in his punishments the innocent with the guilty; deceiving his creatures by equivocations and lies, and announcing his will in ambiguous language, should not be taken as a rule of conduct; or the dictates of the Supreme Intelligence. For if we desire that men should have good moral character themselves, the God whom they worship must be as perfect in his moral attributes as the mind of man can possibly conceive. This is the only protection against the oppression and tyranny of wicked men. Men could not then be imposed upon by words, we should not then hear of just-war; and we should discover the cheat, as soon as we should now, were any person to talk of just robbery or honest thieving. We should not then be persuaded to kill one man for the crimes of another, because he speaks the same language, or wears a coat of the same colour. But how shall we be just if our God be unjust? how shall we be

humane if he be cruel and vindictive? how shall we be steady to our engagements, if God break his. In our apprehension the true God, or Supreme Being, can do no action of which he shall afterwards repent, as the God of the Hebrews is said to have repented that he made man, Gen. 6. 6. And it repented the Lord that he had made man and it grieved him at his heart.

7. And the Lord said I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast and the creeping things and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

It might be inquired what offence the creeping things, the beasts, and the fowls of the air, could give him, but the text offers nothing to satisfy the mind, but the caprice of an angry God.

Although we consider the story of Eve and the apple as a fiction, and impossible to have happened in the nature of things, yet as we do not decide on that ground, or examine by those principles, because there is always a ready answer to every objection made to miracles, namely, that God can do any thing; his power is infinite, he could make a man's nose as big as the steeple of Strasburgh if he pleases; and so forth—granted. But tell me would the Supreme Being do an unjust thing? would he tell lies on purpose to deceive?—no, every one would answer, and yet the God of the Hebrews is guilty of this and much more, Gen. 11. 17, he says to Adam, (Eve was not then in existence,) of the tree of knowledge of good or evil thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day thou eatest of it thou shalt surely die. Now this was certainly false, for he did not die on that day, nor for many years afterwards; and if by dying something else was meant, then it comes under the charge of deceiving by ambiguous language. This is not all, the woman is punished who received no commandment. She might have heard of it indeed from Adam, and the idea she had formed was that something evil would happen as a necessary, natural consequence, from eating the fruit; it does not appear that she had any notion of a moral consequence arising from disobedience, for that reason the serpent found no great difficulty in persuading her to eat, for he spoke from his own knowledge—and Adam only from report. The serpent also, it is said was the most subtil beast of the field, this epithet he could not acquire but by his superior skill and knowledge—but his wisdom and truth availed him nothing, he is condemned to crawl

on his belly and lick the dust of the earth, and he who was only accessory before the fact, and not considered as a moral agent, is punished with the greatest severity.

This story bears a great similarity to the manner of writing among the ancients, when they endeavored to account for the supposed deformities of nature. Ever incapable of seeing perfection; and unwilling to believe that the Supreme Being would, at first, make an imperfect work; they were forever manufacturing stories to account for his spoiling the work of his own hands. It is probable, therefore, that the Jews picked up this fable among the Egyptians, and thinking it would make their history more perfect, inserted it at the beginning.

We shall take no notice of the interpretation and comment upon this fable by the Christian writers, such as, that the serpent was not a real serpent, but a bad spirit in the figure of a serpent; that by the transgression of Adam the human race is condemned to everlasting fire, &c.; this makes the matter much worse on the part of God, but as it belongs properly to the character of the Christian God, which we are not now examining, we must return to the God of the Hebrews: and passing over the story of the great deluge, and of Noah with his ark, looking only to the moral, I ask to what purpose was the old world destroyed and what good accrued from it. The new world soon grew to be as wicked as it was possible for the old world to be, and they departed from the worship of Adonai, or the Lord, for upwards of 700 years till it was revived by Abraham. It is said, that Sodom and Gomorah and all the cities of the plain, were destroyed for their wickedness; but nothing is so great a proof of the vices of any particular period, as when great crimes are related and passed over without censure; of such kind is the abomination of two daughters lying with their father;—the ingratitude of Sarah to Hagar, and the treacherous villany of Simeon and Levi in the murder of Hamor and Sechem, Gen. 34. So that it does not appear that the moral chracter of man was at all improved by the destruction of the old world, and although he promises never again to destroy the race of man *at once*, he is continually finding reason to cut them off in detail, sometimes hardening their hearts to prevent their obedience and escape from punishment, Exod. 4, 21. And the Lord said unto Moses when thou goest to return to Egypt see that thou do all the wonders which I have put in

thine hand—but I will harden his heart that he shall not let the children of Israel go. Would it not have been as easy to have softened the heart of Pharaoh as to have hardened it, when so many innocent people throughout the land of Egypt were to be sufferers through that hardness of heart.

And when Moses went to return into Egypt according to the command of the Lord to perform the wonders which he put in his hand, it came to pass that by the way in the inn that the Lord met him and sought to kill him, no reason is given why the Lord should seek to kill Moses; however, we are left to conjecture that it was on account of his son not being circumcised; for it immediately follows in the next verse, "Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said surely a bloody husband art thou to me, so he let him go. It is probable that the amiable daughter of Jethro, could not be persuaded by Moses to commit so great a cruelty upon her child, while she resided among her own kindred, but no sooner does he get her from home, and on the road to Egypt than he pretends to have seen the Lord, who had threatened to kill him if the child were not circumcised; and, therefore, she says, surely a bloody husband art thou to me; but if she had directed the sharp stone at the head of Moses, and thereby put an end to his existence, the human race would have been under infinite obligations to the daughter of Jethro, and she would have been the saviour of her own nation.

In inflicting the punishment upon the Egyptians it appears more like a wanton exercise of power in the Lord than to bring men to a sense of their duty and consequent reformation, which ought to be the reason of punishment. All classes of society are involved in the affliction: for it is said, Exod. 12 and 29, the Lord smote all the first born in the land of Egypt, from the first born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the first born of the captive that was in the dungeon, and all the first born of cattle. Here we see him again exercising his fury upon the dumb creation as a drunken man in a passion with his wife, vents his rage against the furniture and glasses, such a God would do very well for a bug-bear to the ignorant Jews but never can meet with admiration or devotion by enlightened men at the close of the 18th century of the Christian æra, or at the dawn of the age of reason.

LETTER OF WILLIAM PITT,

Afterwards Earl of Chatham, addressed to the people of England; first printed in the London Journal, in 1733.

"Pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this; to visit the Fatherless and Widows in their affiictions, and to keep one's self unspotted from the World."

Gentlemen, whoever takes a view of the world, will find, that what the greatest part of mankind have agreed to call religion, has been only some outward exercise esteemed sufficient to work a reconciliation with God. It has moved them to build temples, slay victims, offer up sacrifices, to fast and feast, to petition and thank, to laugh and cry, to sing and sigh by turns; but it has not yet been found sufficient to induce them to break off an amour, to make restitution of ill gotten wealth, or to bring the passions and appetites to a reasonable subjection. Differ as much as they may in opinion, concerning what they ought to believe, or after what manner they are to serve God, as they call it, yet they all agree in gratifying their appetites. The same passions reign eternally in all countries and in all ages, the Jew and Mahometan, the Christian and the Pagan, the Tartar and the Indian, all kinds of men who differ in almost every thing else, universally agree with regard to their passions: if there be any difference among them it is this, that the more superstitious, the more vicious they always are, and the more they believe, the less they practice. This is a melancholy consideration to a good mind; it is a truth, and certainly above all things worth our while to inquire into. We will, therefore, probe the wound, and search to the bottom; we will lay the axe to the root of the tree, and show you the true reason why men go on in sinning and repenting, and sinning again through the whole course of their lives; and the reason is, because they have been taught, most wickedly taught, that religion and virtue are two things absolutely distinct; that the deficiency of the one, might be supplied by the sufficiency of the other; and that what you want in virtue, you must make up in religion. But this religion, so dishonourable to God, and so pernicious to men, is worse than Atheism, for Atheism, though it takes away one great motive to support virtue in distress, yet it furnishes no man with arguments to be vicious; but superstition, or what the world means by religion, is the greatest possible encouragement to vice, by setting up

something as religion, which shall atone and commute for the want of virtue. This is establishing iniquity by a law, the highest law; by authority, the highest authority; that of God himself. We complain of the vices of the world, and of the wickedness of men, without searching into the true cause. It is not because they are wicked by nature, for that is both false and impious; but because to serve the purpose of their pretended soul savers, they have been carefully taught that they are wicked by nature, and cannot help continuing so. It would have been impossible for men to have been both religious and vicious, had religion been made to consist wherein alone it does consist; and had they been always taught that true religion is the practice of virtue in obedience to the will of God, who presides over all things, and will finally make every man happy who does his duty.

This single opinion in religion, that all things are so well made by the Deity, that virtue is its own reward, and that happiness will ever arise from acting according to the reason of things, or that God, ever wise and good, will provide some extraordinary happiness for those who suffer for virtue's sake, is enough to support a man under all difficulties, to keep him steady to his duty, and to enable him to stand as firm as a rock, amidst all the charms of applause, profit and honor. But this religion of reason, which all men are capable of, has been neglected and condemned, and another set up, the natural consequences of which have puzzled men's understandings, and debauched their morals, more than all the lewd poets and atheistical philosophers that ever infested the world; for instead of being taught that religion consists in action, or obedience to the eternal moral law of God, we have been most gravely and venerably told that it consists in the belief of certain opinions which we could form no idea of, or which were contrary to the clear perceptions of our minds, or which had no tendency to make us either wiser or better, or which is much worse had a manifest tendency to make us wicked and immoral. And this belief, this impious belief, arising from imposition on one side, and from want of examination on the other, has been called by the sacred name of religion, whereas real and genuine religion consists in knowledge and obedience. We know there is a God, and we know his will, which is, that we should do all the good we can; and we are assured from his perfections, that we shall find our own good in so doing.

And what would we have more? are we, after such inquiry, and in an age full of liberty, children still? and cannot we be quiet unless we have holy romances, sacred fables, and traditionary tales to amuse us in an idle hour, and to give rest to our souls, when our follies and vices will not suffer us to rest?

You have been taught, indeed, that right belief, or orthodoxy, will, like charity, cover a multitude of sins; but be not deceived, belief of, or mere assent to the truth of propositions upon evidence is not a virtue, nor unbelief a vice; faith is not a voluntary act, it does not depend upon the will; every man must believe or disbelieve, whether he will or not, according as evidence appears to him. If, therefore, men, however dignified or distinguished, command us to believe, they are guilty of the highest folly and absurdity, because it is out of our power, but if they command us to believe, and annex rewards to belief, and serve penalties to unbelief, then they are most wicked and immoral, because they annex rewards and punishments to what is involuntary, and, therefore, neither rewardable or punishable. It appears, then, very plainly, unreasonable and unjust to command us to believe any doctrine, good or bad, wise or unwise; but, when men command us to believe opinions, which have not only no tendency to promote virtue, but which are allowed to commute or atone for the want of it, then they are arrived at the utmost pitch of impiety, then is their iniquity full; then have they finished the misery, and completed the destruction of poor mortal man; by betraying the interest of virtue, they have undermined and sapped the foundation of all human happiness; and how treacherously and dreadfully have they betrayed it! A gift, well applied, the chattering of some unintelligible sounds called creeds; an unfeigned assent and consent to whatever the church enjoins, religious worship and consecrated feasts; repenting on a death bed; pardons rightly sued out; and absolution authoritatively given, have done more towards making and continuing men vicious, than all the natural passions and infidelity put together, for infidelity can only take away the supernatural rewards of virtue; but these superstitious opinions and practices, have not only turned the scene, and made men lose sight of the natural rewards of it, but have induced them to think, that were there no hereafter, vice would be preferable to virtue, and that they increase in happiness as they increase in wickedness; and this they have been taught in several religious discourses and sermons, delivered by men

whose authority was never doubted, particularly by a late Rev. prelate, I mean Bishop Atterbury, in his sermon on these words, "If in this life only be hope, then we are of all men most miserable," where vice and faith ride most lovingly and triumphantly together. But these doctrines of the natural excellency of vice, the efficacy of a right belief, the dignity of atonements and propitiations, have, beside depriving us of the native beauty and charms of honesty, and thus cruelly stabbing virtue to the heart, raised and diffused among men a certain unnatural passion, which we shall call religious hatred; a hatred constant, deep-rooted, and immortal. All other passions rise and fall, die and revive again, but this of religious and pious hatred rises and grows every day stronger upon the mind as we grow more religious, because we hate for God's sake, and for the sake of those poor souls too, who have the misfortune not to believe as we do, and can we in so good a cause hate too much? The more thoroughly we hate, the better we are; and the more mischief we do to the bodies and states of those infidels and heretics, the more do we show our love to God. This is religious zeal, and this has been called divinity: but remember, the only true divinity is humanity. W. PITT.

REMARKS OF ELIAS HICKS,

On the supposed attonement, by the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, for the sin of Adam and Eve in eating a forbidden fruit.

Elias Hicks, a celebrated Quaker preacher, at New-York, in a letter addressed to the Rev. Dr. Shoemaker, dated 3d mo. 31, 1823, speaking of the atonement, and those who believe in it, writes, "Surely, is it possible that any rational being, that has any right sense of justice and mercy, would be willing to accept forgiveness of his sins on such terms? Would he not go forward, and offer himself wholly up, to suffer all the penalties due to his crimes, rather than the innocent should suffer? Nay, was he so hardy as to acknowledge a willingness to be saved through such a medium, would it not prove that he stood in direct opposition to every principle of justice and honesty, of mercy and love, and show himself a poor selfish creature, unworthy of notice?" Towards the conclusion of his letter he says, "I may now recommend thee to shake off all traditional views that thou hast imbibed

from *external evidence*, and turn thy mind to the light within, as the *only true* teacher; and wait patiently for its instructions, and it will teach thee more than men or books can do, and lead thee to a clearer sight and sense of what thou desirest to know, than I have words clearly to convey to thee."

In his discourses the following sentiments have been noted and published; "That the *death of Jesus Christ was no more to us than the death of any other good man;* that he merely performed his part on earth, just as any other good man had done; that he did not believe any thing contained in the Scriptures merely because it was in them; that although the miracles might have been a proof to those who saw them, yet they could be no proof to us, who did not see them. Is it possible, said he, that there is any person, so ignorant or superstitious, as to believe, that there ever was on earth such a place as the garden of Eden, or that Adam and Eve were really put into it, and turned out of it for eating an apple? My friends, it is all an allegory."

LORD ERSKINE'S OPINION

Of the principles that will regulate the sentence to be pronounced upon the human species at the *Day of Judgment;* extracted from his speech, on the trial of Stockdale, for an alledged libel on the English House of Commons.

"Every human tribunal ought to take care to administer justice, as we look hereafter to have justice administered to ourselves. Upon the principles on which the Attorney-General prays sentence upon my client—God have mercy upon us!—For which of us can present, for omniscient examination, a pure, unspotted, and faultless course.—But I humbly expect that the benevolent author of our being will judge us as I have been pointing out for your example—Holding up the great volume of our lives in his hands, and regarding the general scope of them. If he discovers benevolence, charity, and good will to man beating in the heart, where *he* alone can look;—if he finds that our conduct, though often forced out of the path by our infirmities, has been in general well directed; his all-searching eye will assuredly never pursue us into those little corners of our lives, much less will his justice select them for punishment, without the general context of our existence,

by which faults may be some times found to have grown out of virtues, and very many of our heaviest offences to have been grafted by human imperfection upon the best and kindest of our affections. No, believe me, this is not the course of divine justice. If the general tenor of a man's conduct be such as I have represented it, he may walk through the shadow of death, with all his faults about him, with as much cheerfulness as in the common paths of life; because he knows, that instead of a stern accuser to expose before the Author of his nature those frail passages, which like the scored matter in the book before you, chequers the volume of the brightest and best spent life, his mercy will obscure them from the eye of his purity, and our repentance blot them out forever."

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Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: Jan. 2005

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